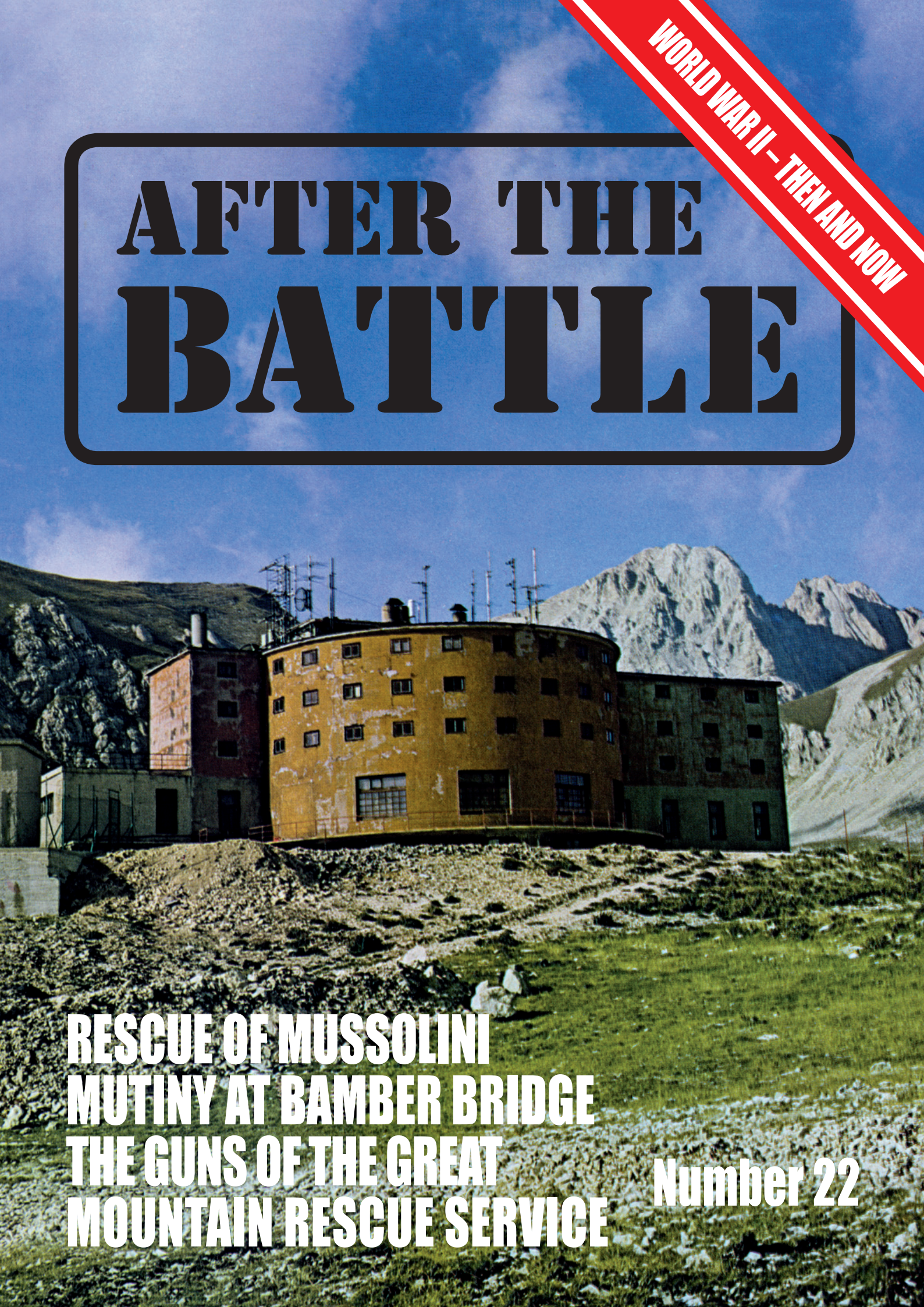
WORLD WAR II – THEN AND NOW

AFTER THE BATTLE



RESCUE OF MUSSOLINI

MUTINY AT BAMBER BRIDGE

THE GUNS OF THE GREAT MOUNTAIN RESCUE SERVICE

Number 22

AFTER THE BATTLE

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Front Cover: The Hotel Albergo-Rifugio, 6,000ft up in the Gran Sasso mountains in Italy, from where Benito Mussolini was rescued by German troops on September 12, 1943.

Centre Pages: Bird's-eye-view of the hotel and plateau where the gliders landed.

Back Cover: The American War Cemetery at Madingly, just west of Cambridge, England. Private William Crossland, killed in the mutiny at Bamber Bridge, Lancashire in 1943, lies buried in front of the sixty-fifth cross from the right in the front row.

Acknowledgements: The editor is indebted to the late Otto Skorzeny and his publishers, Robert Hale Ltd., for permission to quote from *Skorzeny's Special Missions* in our feature on the rescue of Mussolini.

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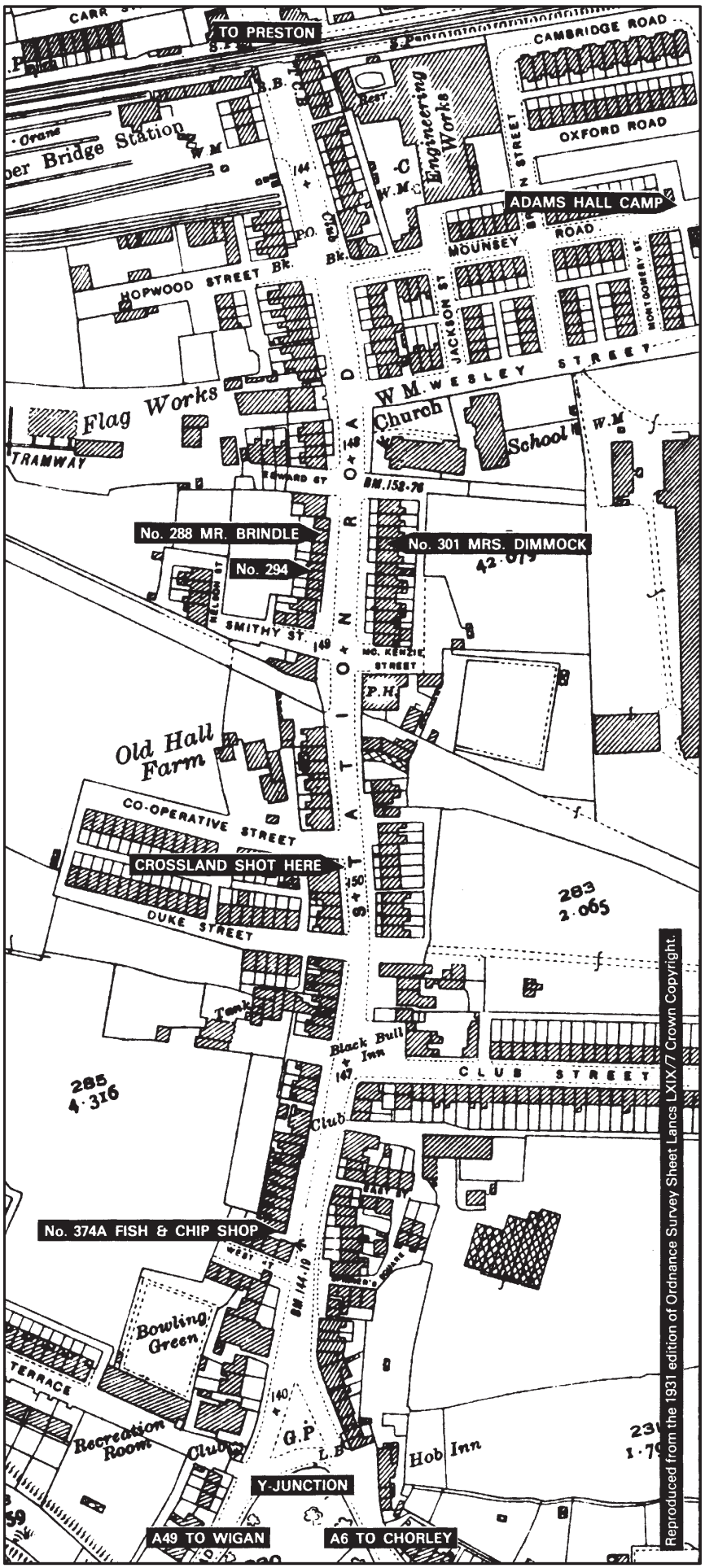
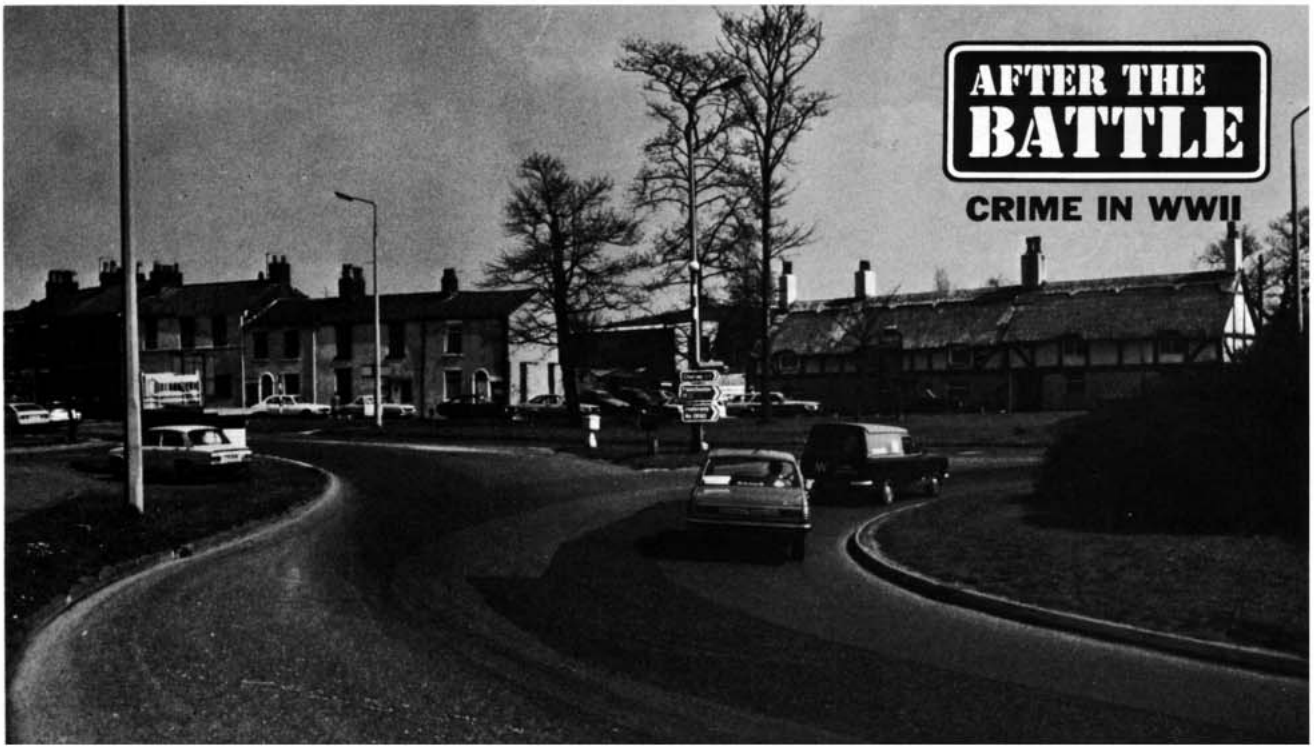




THE MUTINY AT BAMBER BRIDGE

BY DR. KEN WERRELL

Professor of History, Radford College, Virginia

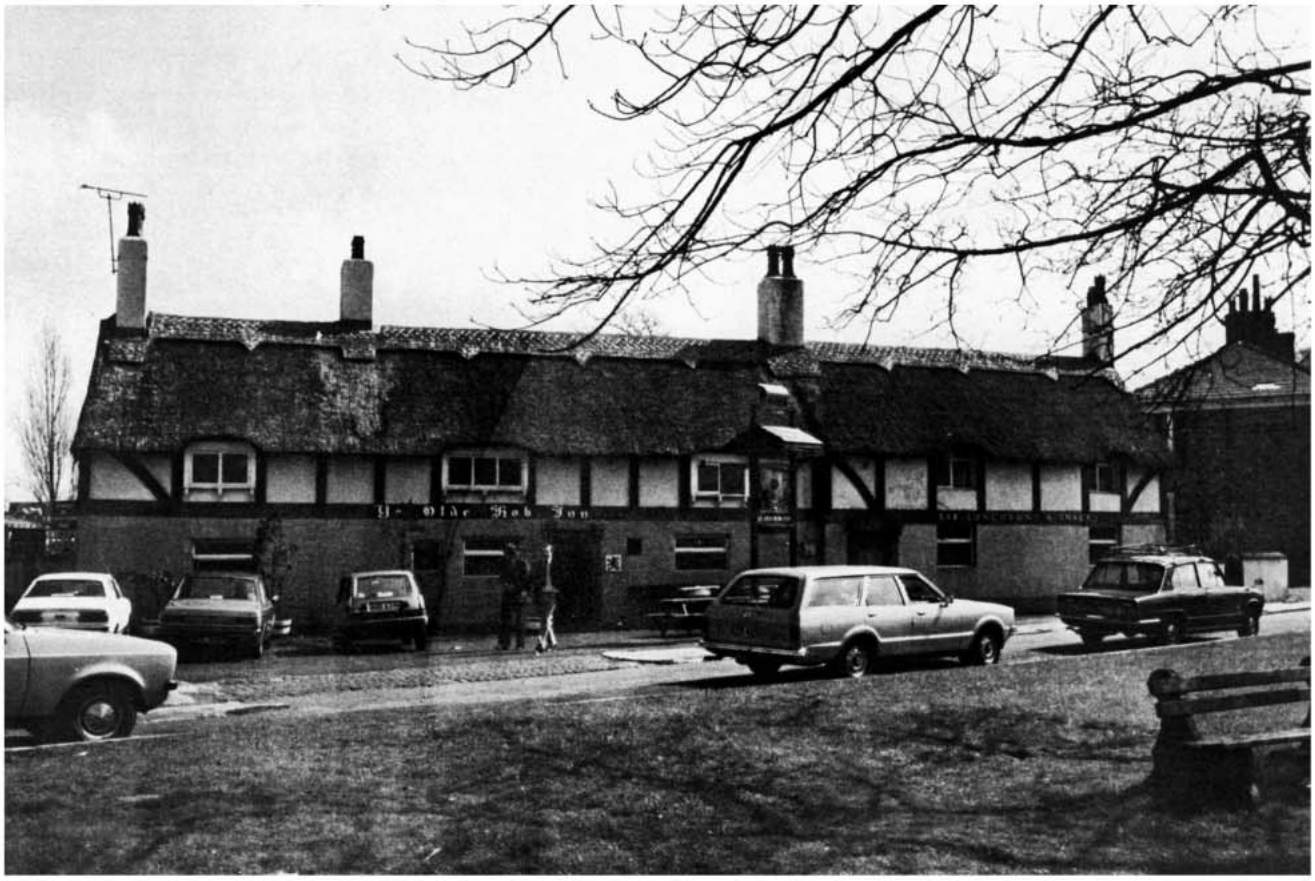
Bamber Bridge in Lancashire lies astride the main A6 route to Scotland, a mile or so to the south of Preston. At the southern approach to the town, the A6 is joined by the A49 from Wigan forming, in 1943, a Y junction. An old thatched pub, the Old Hob Inn, lies on the right-hand side of the junction from which point the A6 is called Station Road as it passes north through Bamber Bridge. In the centre of the town, the main rail line from Liverpool to Blackburn crosses the road via a level crossing, effectively separating the town into two halves, north and south of the track. South of the railway line, small Victorian terrace houses line Station Road, some of those on the right or eastern side of the street having small, walled front gardens. Nearly all the houses on the left have their front doors opening directly onto the pavement. Two more pubs lie between the Old Hob Inn and the level crossing (a distance of about half-a-mile) — the Black Bull and the Mackenzie Arms — both on the right hand side.

Just before the level crossing, Mounsey Road leads off on the right. Today the road passes through an attractive post-war housing estate but in 1943 it was the location of Adams Hall — a misleading name for a motley collection of army huts which housed US Eighth Army Air Force Station 569.

Station 569 consisted of several Quartermaster Truck Companies composed largely of coloured troops. In the early 1940s, problems of race or colour were virtually unknown in Britain (indeed the words 'colour bar' had not even been coined) and it was only the influx of American forces, with their established practice of segregated units, that led to the first outbreaks of race violence in the UK. In 1975, Kenneth P. Werrell, an Associate Professor of History at Radford College in Virginia in the United States, published his research into a race riot which led to a mutiny of American troops at Bamber Bridge in 1943 in the *Aerospace Historian* magazine. Now, after further research in Bamber Bridge by the editor exactly thirty-five years later, Ken Werrell describes what happened.

On the evening of June 24, 1943, two American Military policemen, Corporal Roy A. Windsor and Private First Class Ralph F. Ridgeway, were patrolling Bamber Bridge in a jeep. Shortly before 10.00 p.m., three American officers told the pair that there was trouble at the Old Hob Inn which prompted the white MPs to drive there and investigate. Ridgeway entered the pub which had closed at 10.00 p.m. and found a group of Britons and ten to twelve black American soldiers inside. The colored soldiers had ordered beer but were refused by the barmaid Doris Billington as it was after hours. The MP attempted to arrest one of the colored soldiers, Private Eugene Nunn, who was dressed in a field jacket (class A uniform was the regulation walking-out dress) and had no pass. Nunn refused to co-operate and a crowd gathered around the two. Outside Corporal Windsor, the senior MP, questioning another colored soldier on the same matter and, fearing that things were getting out of hand, shouted to his partner 'Let's go!' As Ridgeway emerged, British soldiers, civilians and a number of American blacks congregated. A British soldier asked 'Why do you want to arrest them? They are not doing anything or bothering anybody'. Angry mutterings, such as 'No one is arresting nobody from here' and 'There'll be no arrests by MPs tonight' came from the crowd. One aggressive black, later identified by Windsor as Private Lynn M. Adams, advanced on Windsor with a bottle in his hand. According to a colored Staff Sergeant, William Byrd, the MP Corporal

The mutiny at Bamber Bridge, Lancashire in June 1943 had its beginnings in the bar *(photo above)* of the Old Hob Inn situated beside the now-modernised A6/A49 road junction *(top photo).*



Scene of the first recalcitration between the black soldiers and the white MPs. The military police jeep was parked on the road outside the pub which, because of the new roundabout, is now only used for parking by pub patrons.

twice ordered Adams to halt and when he did not, drew his gun. At this point, Byrd grabbed Adams and heard Windsor say: 'Look out I'm going to shoot'. Byrd was able to cool the explosive situation by telling the MP: 'I wouldn't shoot if I were you. If you are going to do anything to control it, do it with your stick' upon which Windsor holstered his weapon. Windsor climbed into the jeep and called to Ridgeway that there were too many soldiers. Meanwhile a soldier grabbed Ridgeway's arm, but let go when hit by the MP's club. Before the MP's jeep could pull away, Byrd saw Adams throw a bottle that burst as it hit the windshield. The black Staff Sergeant also heard the MPs promise to return.

The crowd broke up with the blacks heading toward their camp, Adams Hall, a few hundred yards up the road. The soldiers walked in twos up the right side of Station Road, Adams and Private Albert Jackson in the lead, followed by Nunn and Private William Ogletree, Privates William Crossland and James H. Wise, with Sergeant Byrd bringing up the rear. Following behind were three British ATS (Auxiliary Territorial Service) privates. The coloured soldiers kept turning round and talking to the ATS girls, all of which was observed by several of the residents in the street including a Special Constable, Albert Cowley.

Meanwhile the MPs had driven toward the police station, which lay beyond the railroad crossing on the corner of Tyne Street and Withey Place, for reinforcements. At the railroad crossing they stopped and picked up two American MPs on foot patrol, Private First Class Carson W. Bozman and Private Spurlock Mullins. Heading back south toward the Old Hob Inn, the MPs spotted a group of black soldiers weaving, shouting and waving bottles and recognized two of the men from the earlier incident. The jeep drove past and nearly to the Y junction at the Old Hob where the MPs stopped and talked to the two American officers, Captain Julius F. Hirst and First Lieutenant Gerald C. Sylvester. Windsor did not think he and the other three MPs could handle the situation and asked for help. According to Windsor, Captain Hirst made no constructive suggestions and said that there was nothing he could do; Windsor must go ahead and do his duty.

The MP jeep turned around at the 'Y' and drove back toward the group of soldiers. The time was 10.25 p.m. They overtook the group which was on the right-hand sidewalk just beyond the McKenzie Arms (between McKenzie and Edward Streets) and parked their jeep on the left side of the street outside No. 294 Station Road, (American readers should note that Britons drive on the left.) The four MPs dismounted opposite the black soldiers, one of whom was standing in the centre of the road drinking from a bottle. Two black soldiers, who were not tried for any offense, testified later that two or three of the MPs moved forward with drawn guns, cursing and one yelling: 'By God men, come on!' — an allegation the MPs denied. On the other hand the Special Constable, Albert Cowley (standing opposite the Mackenzie Arms) said that 'the driver of the jeep stopped, one of the police got out, went to the coloured soldier and had a conversation with him. One of the coloured soldiers came up to them and started pushing the policeman and the other three police got out of the jeep and went to them.' In any event, the black soldiers and white MPs approached each other near the center of the street. There were shouts, curses, insults, dares and then, in short order, a brief, confused and bloody fight.

MPs Windsor and Bozman went up to Adams, who was waving the bottle and attempted to arrest him while Private Ridgeway approached Nunn. A crowd of other blacks gathered about the MPs and soldiers bringing the total number of black GIs to 10 or 12, or,

The railway crossing in Station Road is still in use today.

Above: **The editor and his son re-trace the route of the black GIs northwards along Station Road towards the site of their old camp. Just passing No. 315 but, alas, no ATS girls.**

as the MPs testified, 15 to 20. Ridgeway blocked Nunn's blow before he retreated across the street. Bozman was hit between the eyes by a thrown bottle and then was jumped by Nunn who pinned the arms of the bloody MP. However Bozman called Windsor who beat Nunn to the ground as he thought the black soldier was reaching for Bozman's gun. More bottles and four-pound cobble-stones were thrown, the latter taken from Mrs. Emily Dimmock's front garden (No. 301 Station Road). Ridgeway saw Bozman hit and as he began to draw his gun he was hit, first in the forehead and then by a second missile which knocked him out. Bozman was wiping the blood from his eyes when he was hit on the wrist by a rock. The MP saw the same soldier about to throw another cobble-stone and warned him to stop. When Ogletree did not, Bozman yelled again before firing one shot at him. Two other blacks charged Bozman who shouted two warnings and then fired once, hitting the bottle-wielding Adams in the neck. Within five seconds of Bozman's two shots, Mullins also fired. Mullins was the last to exit the jeep. He was backed up by three blacks, one advancing on him with a knife yelling: 'Kill the Goddamn son of a bitch!' while another dared: 'Shoot! Shoot you yellow coward!' To his right Mullins saw Ridgeway go down and then he saw the soldier who threw the object come up to Ridgeway and reach for the MP's gun. Mullins fired once from the hip but missed. The MP's shots scattered the crowd.

The fight had been witnessed by several Britons besides the constable: William Hunt and his wife Margaret at No. 317 Station Road. Mr. Edward Brindle at No. 288; Mr. James Thompson of No. 351; Mrs. Dimmock at No. 301 and Mr. Albert Cowley of No. 2 Edward Street, all of whom later appeared as prosecution witnesses at the trial. Poor Mrs. Isabella Duxbury of No. 282 Station Road was so overwrought at the trial that she stated that 'the darkies started shooting!' Mrs. Frances Baldwin and her daughter Vera at No. 294 had a grandstand view and watched the whole incident from their front room window. The Baldwins testified at the trial that jeeps full of officers and MPs soon arrived on the scene.

Both the black soldiers and white MPs carried off their injured comrades. As the blacks proceeded toward Adams Hall they encountered Captain Hirst and Lieutenant Sylvester in a jeep and asked them to carry the wounded men to the Post Hospital. Four of the blacks claim that the officers refused.

As the MPs fell back for reinforcements, the blacks arrived back at Adams Hall. Rumors came with them and swept the sleeping camp: blacks had been shot in the back and the MPs were gunning for blacks.

Some of the dazed black soldiers rushed to the main gate, a few carrying rifles. A crowd of 100 to 200 milled about the area. Major George C. Heris, the Acting Commander, who later characterized the scene as 'a mob frenzy' attempted to calm the men, restore order and get the troops back to their barracks. According to him, the 'air was tense'.

Meanwhile some of the coloured soldiers slipped into Bamber Bridge with arms, apparently intending to even the score. Some

Below: **Crossing Station Road at the exact spot where the fight occurred thirty-five years previously. No. 294 is the first doorway on the left.**

even tried to leave the camp in military vehicles. A line of trucks headed for the front gate but Heris headed off the first truck.

At around 11.00 p.m., a second truck carrying six or seven armed men swung out of the line nearly hitting Heris and Captain Ellis M. Anderson and crashed through the main gate at about 25-30 mph. At this point, Heris told the men: 'I know Colonel (Jack G.) Pitcher (the absent unit commander) is for you men, and I am for you. Now we cannot take these things into our own hands. Put up your rifles and go back to the barracks.' Twice he ordered the men to return to their quarters.

Receiving no response, Heris called on the unit's sole black officer, Lieutenant Edwin D. Jones (who had been commissioned only three months earlier) to speak. 'I am one of your boys,' the special services officer said. 'You put up your arms, I know Colonel Pitcher and Major Heris have been with us 100 per cent. We cannot take these things into our own hands. We'll go back to the barracks and the guilty ones will suffer and he will see that justice is done.' This worked. By convincing the men that someone in authority would listen to their stories and do something, the two officers were able to get most of the men to return to their barracks. Despite the dramatic gate-crashing incident, it seemed the situation was getting under some control. Although the men were agitated and some were armed, most were inert and safely within the camp.

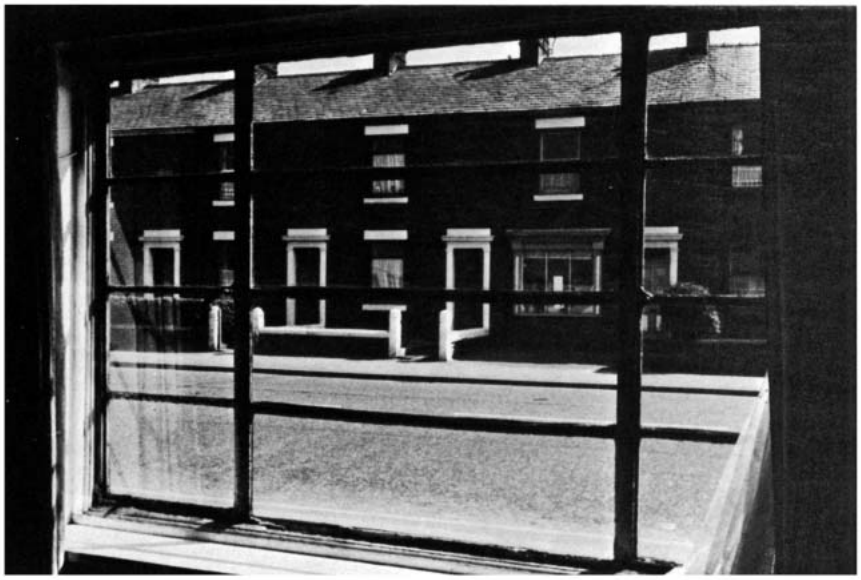
The tense situation — a large number of armed excited men who would not obey their officers — seemingly was exacerbated by some of the unit's black non-commissioned officers. Two of the unit's First Sergeants, the very men expected to provide the leadership and strength to quell such a problem, instead, in the opinion of the unit's officers, contributed to the difficulties. Certainly these sergeants were torn between their strict military duty on the one hand and their own emotions and feelings for their men and race on the other. Numerous officers described one NCO, First Sergeant George W. Patterson, as very excited, highly nervous and nearly hysterical. The chaplain, Captain Marvin L. Moll, (white because the army authorities believed black chaplains hurt discipline) used the words 'entirely beserk' to describe the sergeant's actions. The NCO was seen struggling for the gate but was restrained by two of his men. Normally well dressed, that evening he was dishevelled with his blouse unbuttoned, shirt collar open, and hatless. Allegedly the sergeant made such statements as: 'I hope the men are all right or I don't know what I would do'; 'Lieutenant, who shot my man?' and 'By God, I am going to find out who shot him.' Despite his distraught appearance and because of his concern, the sergeant received permission to leave the post and go to the hospital to see his wounded men on the condition that he conduct himself in an orderly and soldierly manner in a class A uniform. Major Heris put the NCO on his honor and the two shook hands, a most unusual and unmilitary gesture between an officer and NCO. There was no saluting that night. But when the sergeant returned to Adams Hall, he was overheard to say he had a rifle and ammunition was seen in his hand.

The other First Sergeant, Fred A. Davis, in England only three weeks, allegedly said, 'My men have been shot down in cold blood,' and offered to help calm the men only on conditions that the men would get to see Captain Anderson and that the MPs were put into confinement. The Lieutenant whom he addressed (Robert J. Huxtable) agreed and, accompanied by the NCO and a few other soldiers, started toward the Captain at the main gate. As the group left, the sergeant supposedly remarked to the men remaining, 'If I am not back in fifteen minutes, you can come on or do as you like'. According to the officers at the scene, he told Captain Anderson he would answer for the good conduct of the men if the captain would call off the MPs and that he personally wanted to see the white MPs under guard. If the captain would not comply, the NCO would not help maintain discipline. 'You are not dictating to the United States Army,' was the Captain Anderson's reply. One officer described the sergeant's attitude as that of 'wrathful indignation'. Both the captain and Major Heris attempted in vain to assure the sergeant that the MPs had been removed from town so, finally, Major Heris gave the sergeant permission to go into Bamber Bridge and see for himself which he did. Another officer (Captain Paul T. Milnamow) claimed the NCO had commented that he did not think the MPs were giving the black soldiers a fair chance and that the disorder was a good thing because it would focus attention on the mistreatment of blacks by white MPs.

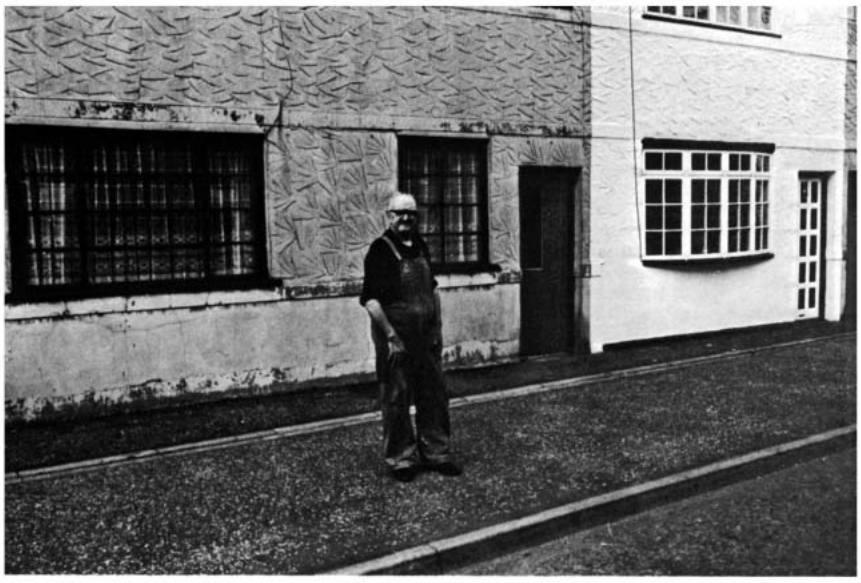
At midnight, the men's fears and emotions were rekindled by the arrival of about one dozen MPs who roared up to the camp in two jeeps and a makeshift armored car, complete with a loaded and, probably more important, visible machine gun. Lights shining throughout the camp added to the awesome effect, which certainly did not help calm the situation. On the contrary, the fears of the troops were confirmed; the rumor was true; white MPs were going to kill black soldiers.

Most of the men at the gate fled, burst into gun rooms, armed themselves and aroused the men in the barracks. They spread the word that 'the white MPs are here with machine guns'. Some implored action: 'Here comes the MPs, let's get the rifles' or 'Get your rifles, there is an armored car at the gate'. Others shrieked: 'Get up! They are coming in with the tanks'.

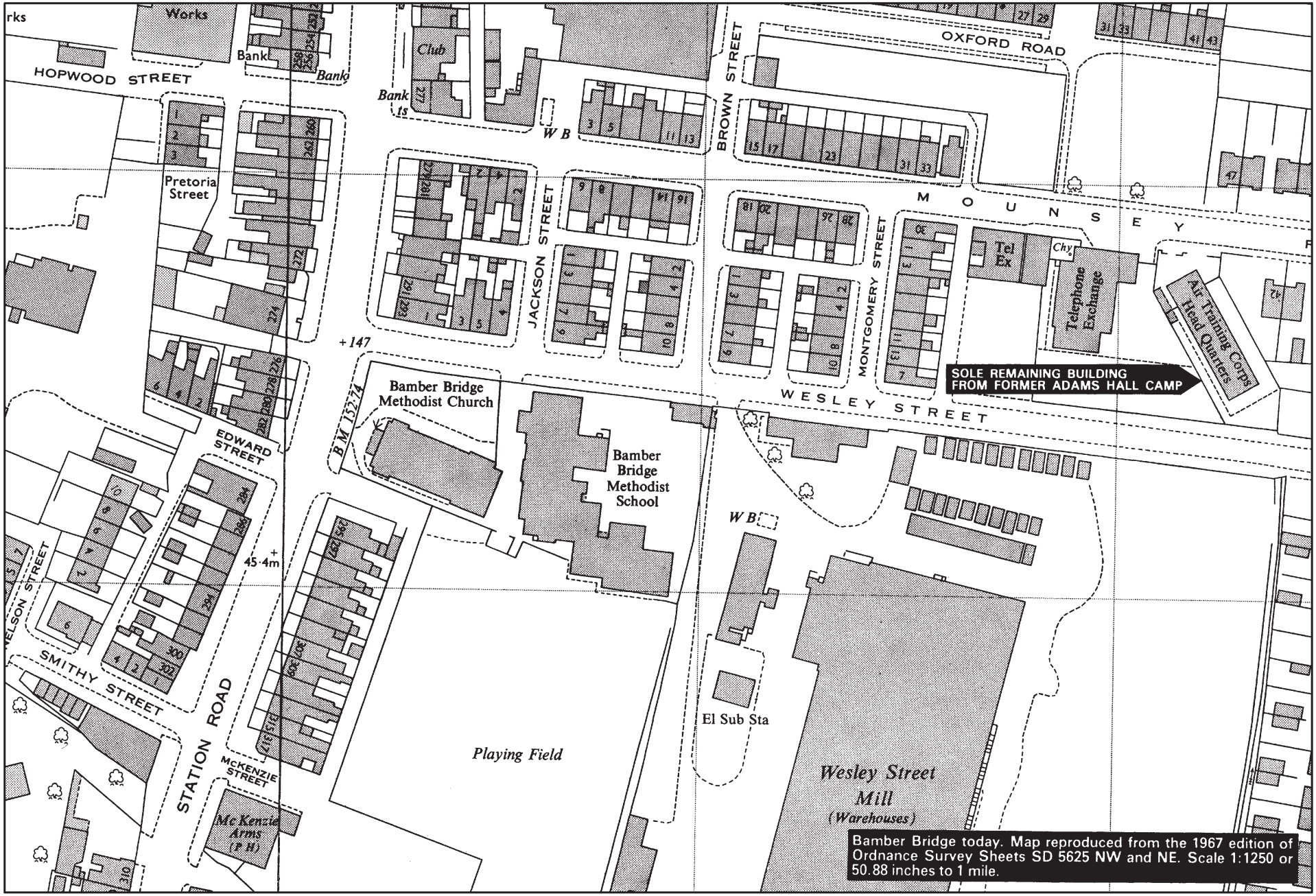
Major Heris and First Lieutenant George S. Roller ordered the MPs to leave but it was too late — the damage had been done. More black soldiers dashed about for arms and ammunition and efforts failed to march off those remaining at the gate. The black soldiers were out of control and the station was in chaos. All the gun rooms were broken into and two-thirds of the rifles seized. Some of the men, apparently fearing the MPs, merely armed themselves and stayed in the camp. Others believed they were defending the camp. A third group took more direct action and, as the MPs moved off, someone fired at them.



Above: **The view Mrs. Baldwin and her daughter Vera would have had of the fight from the front room of their home No. 294. Mrs. Dimmock's hedged garden can be seen on the opposite side of the road on the left.**



Mr. Baldwin indicates the spot outside No. 294 where Private Ogletree fell wounded.



Bamber Bridge today. Map reproduced from the 1967 edition of Ordnance Survey Sheets SD 5625 NW and NE. Scale 1:1250 or 50.88 inches to 1 mile.

Even before midnight there was shooting in Bamber Bridge. Sergeant Lawrence Constable of the County Police was in the Bamber Bridge Police Station that night. At 11.00 p.m., he saw six black soldiers running with rifles and later he saw some soldiers fire at a military police jeep driving through the town. At 11.15 p.m., Arthur Laider, a resident and licensed victualer at the Queen's Hotel (just beyond the Old Hob Inn junction near the cemetery), heard shooting. He testified that some blacks told him: 'You'd better get inside, boss, there's going to be plenty shooting.' Richard Ashcroft of No. 22 Church Road had a similar experience. Ashcroft, who ran a fish and chip business at No. 374A Station Road, heard shots and a whine of bullets, saw blacks with rifles, and was told: 'Get inside! There's going to be war'. Edward Brindle had a more harrowing time. He saw blacks with rifles on two occasions that night and, just as he entered his house, No. 288 Station Road at 2.40 a.m., a bullet struck about eighteen inches behind him.

Americans in the town dodged bullets as well. Lieutenant Lawrence N. Willis and Robert J. Huxtable were shot at and chased by black soldiers. First Lieutenant Richard J. Dickerson and some of his MPs came under fire. Warrant Officer Salem Ghazil was driving through the town when three shots were fired at him. Private Mullins returned to Bamber Bridge and was fired on by two soldiers; he returned the fire with four or five bullets. Three Americans were hit by bullets. MP Private Edward Smith was wounded in the face. At about 1.00 a.m., one of the unit's white officers, First Lieutenant David D. Ousset, heard shots as he turned his vehicle from Station Road into Mounsey Street. He was stopped by a truck blocking the road to the camp and heard someone yell: 'Cut the lights and the motor off!' After waiting about five minutes, Ousset tried to drive around the truck but was stopped by a volley of shots, four of which seriously wounded him in the legs. One of the black soldiers then drove Ousset to the Post Hospital. The MPs were also firing at this time and either their bullets or ones fired by the black soldiers killed Private William Crossland. While there is no conclusive proof how Crossland was killed, he was in the original fight, was seen afterward with a rifle and he died before the cases were tried.

Above: **The original civilian police station just north of the railway crossing is still used today. The station of the 234th US Military Police Company was located on the east side of Station Road, north of the railway near Sergeant Street.**

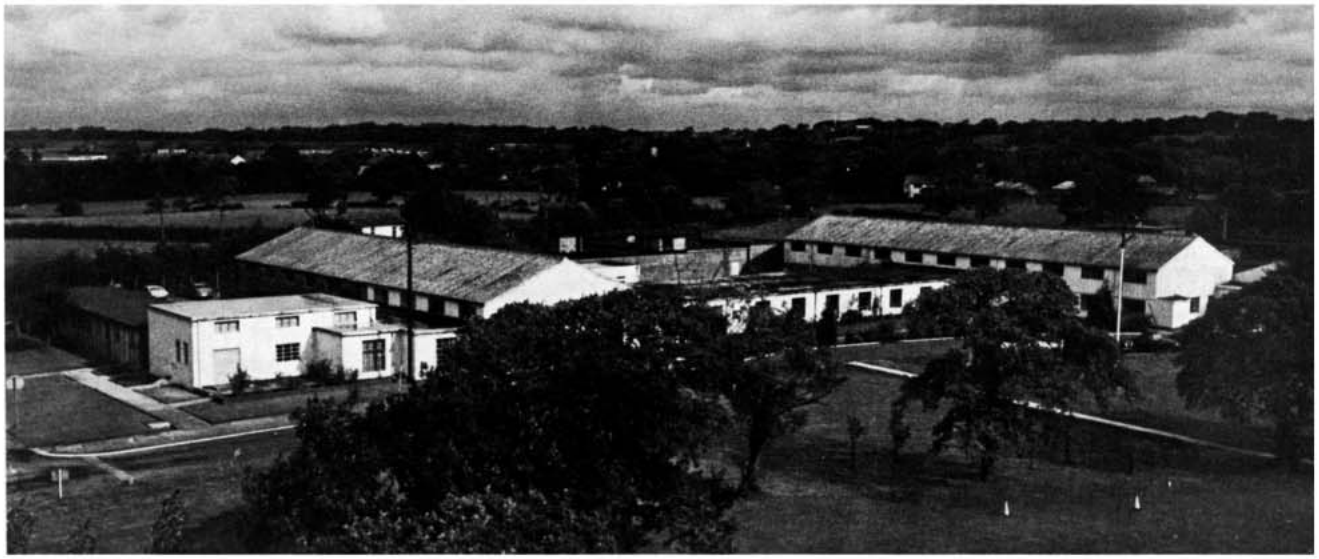
A few shots were also fired in Adams Hall camp. Private John A. Smith heard, 'Smith is not with us; kill him!' and then four or five shots. Apparently these were the only ones. In contrast to the shooting in Bamber Bridge, no one was hit on the post. Vera Baldwin later stated that the shooting went on for hours, although the firing stopped sometime after 3.00 a.m.

Considering the number of men running through the town and fields that night, it is remarkable that the injuries and damage were relatively light. One man was killed (Crossland) and four others were wounded by gunfire: Ogletree and Adams in the original incident and later Ousset and Smith. In addition, Nunn suffered body bruises while the two MPs, Bozman and Ridgeway, respectively received a broken nose and a broken jaw. None of the civilians were injured, although understandably they were terrorized and stayed indoors.

Property damage was minor. Sergeant Constable testified that a bullet hit the door frame at No. 246 Station Road, others hit a window and plaster frieze in a house at the corner of Mounsey Road and Station Road, while a window at No. 2 Jackson Street (which abuts on Mounsey Road) had three bullet holes in it. The Sergeant did not mention the bullet that just missed Ashcroft.

At about 3 or 4.00 a.m., a general arrived on the post and put Second Lieutenant Jones, the only black officer on the post, in command and ordered him to recover the missing rifles. Jones relates how he and Staff Sergeant James E. Pettus (who was at Adams Hall to help Jones organize a sports program) went round and talked to the soldiers. They did not ask

Below: **The view today looking eastwards down Mounsey Road towards the old site of US Army Air Force Station 569. In 1943 this was occupied by the 1945th and 1949th Quartermaster Truck Companies (Avn) of the 1511th QM Truck Regiment.**



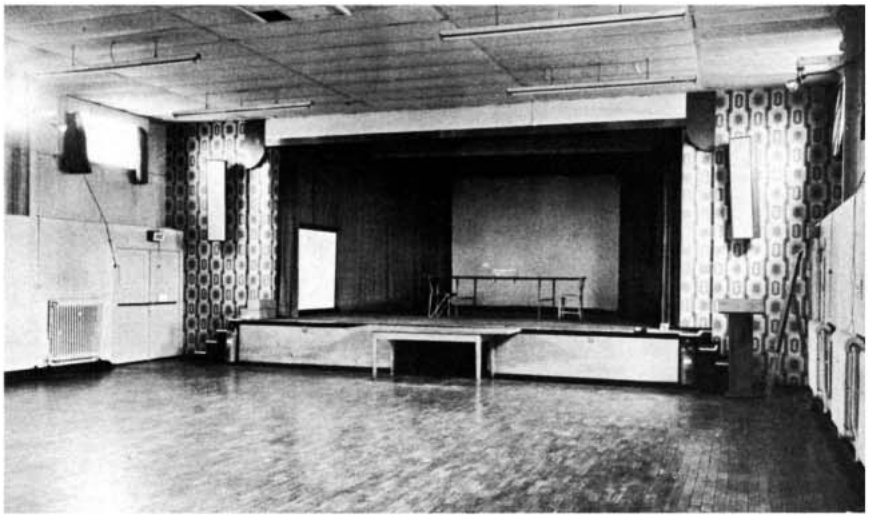
Above: **Washington Hall was the imposing name given to USAAF Station 591 on the Southport road outside Chorley. This is the administrative block.**

direct questions but asked 'If you had a gun, where would you hide it?' and thus were able to find almost all the rifles. By 4.00 p.m. that afternoon (June 25) they had recovered 150 rifles; eventually all but four were found.

Major William R. Reeder investigated the incident and termed it a riot. He was careful to caution that: 'Practically none of the leaders have been caught and that those charged are, for the most part, either nominally guilty or completely innocent as far as the rioting is concerned. Many of them do not as yet understand exactly what they did wrong — and probably never will understand.' Reeder pointed out that although there was a feeling among blacks that the guilty should be caught and punished, some saw the incident as yet another example of white justice running 'rough-shod over their rights in order to whip them into line.' Finally, Reeder believed that the offenders should be given separate trials for the various classes of offenses. For example, those accused of wrongfully obtaining firearms and innocent of mutiny should be separated from the more serious offenders.

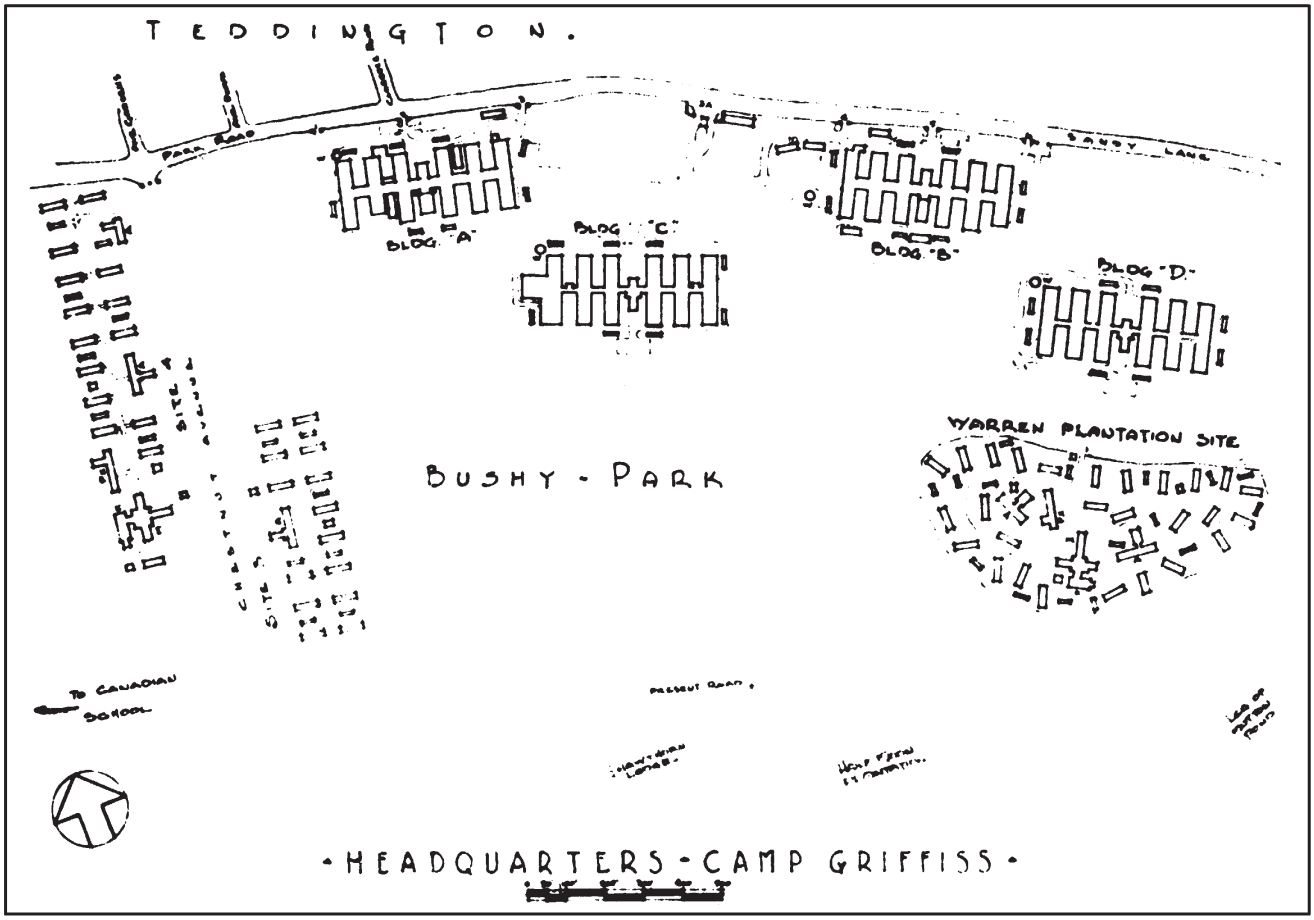
There were two trials; the first, held in August at Station 591 (Washington Hall, Chorley) a few miles to the south, involved four of the black soldiers in the initial brawl — Adams, Nunn, Ogletree and Wise. The defense was vigorous, using every trick in the book. For example, the defense attorney, Captain John A. Watkins, though a southerner, brought blacks from the unit to sit next to the defendants. He maintained that, 'It is highly prejudicial for the four accused, the only colored people in the court, to sit here without any other colored members in the court where a man can identify them because they are the only four colored men here'. The court ruled in his favor on this point, but found all four guilty of resisting arrest, of assaulting the MPs and of riot and sentenced them all to dishonorable discharges, three to three years hard labor, and Wise to two and one-half years of hard labor. Reviewing authorities approved the convictions and sentences of the three but overturned the conviction of Private Wise and designated the Eastern Branch, US Disciplinary Barracks at Beekman, New York, as the place of confinement.

The second, more serious trial, was held at Station 586 — Camp Griffiss (as Eighth Army Air Force Headquarters at Bushy Park, Teddington, on the western outskirts of London was known), and began on September

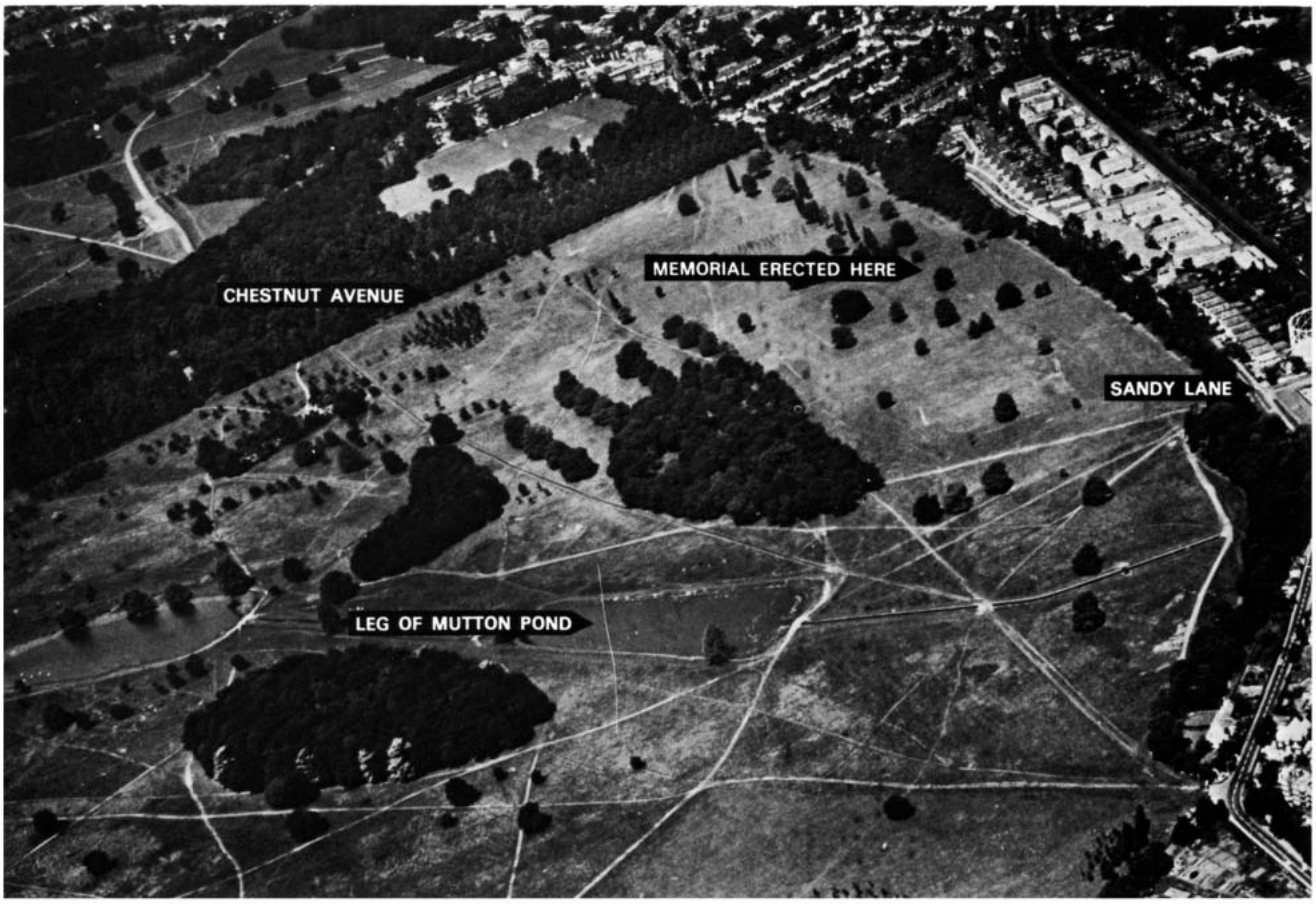


After the war, the camp was taken over by the Home Office, firstly for ordnance and later for fire training use. Today it is the Lancashire Fire Training Centre and remains the most preserved ex-USAAF camp we have visited. *Above:* **The cinema/theatre in the administration block, scene of the first trial.**

Prosecution Exhibit No. 3 at the second trial was this photograph of a shot-up Dodge.



The second, more serious trial which lasted from September 3-19, 1943 was held at the headquarters of the US Eighth Army Air Force located in Bushy Park, just north of Hampton Court. The original plan *(above)* shows its precise location although, as the aerial photograph shows, nothing remains today to indicate the former wartime use of one of London's parks (Aerofilms Ltd).



3, 1943. Private Ogletree, already convicted at Chorley and Private Wise who had been acquitted at the earlier trial were accused together with 33 others. The lawyers were the same although the board was new.

The charges against the men were mutiny against their officers and the MPs by assembly, seizing arms, rioting, firing upon officers and MPs, ignoring orders and failing to disperse. Each man was accused of some, but not all, of these acts. The prosecution argued that 'Every man who took a vehicle, every man who took a rifle after the store rooms had been broken into forcibly and every man who made these agitating and sympathetic remarks was responsible to some extent for that entire serious situation and disturbance.'

On September 18, 1943, the court rendered its verdict: seven men not guilty and 28 guilty as charged. Sentences were passed the next day and ranged from three months to fifteen years, with seven men receiving sentences of twelve or more years. The President of the Court-Martial, Brigadier General Hill, made an almost immediate clemency appeal. He wrote that: 'It is quite apparent that their acts resulted in great part from lack of able leadership on the part of their superiors. The evidence clearly established an appalling state of discipline and training in the unit and at the station where they were serving. Many of the officers whose job it was to guide and control the action of their men utterly failed in the performance of these duties and refused to meet and accept responsibility. Had these officers exercised the degree of proficiency normally expected, it is reasonable to assume that the offenses might never had been committed or at least would not have reached such serious proportions. Although it is recognized that these facts do not excuse the misconduct of the accused, they nevertheless serve to explain the underlying cause of the disorder and to lessen the degree of guilt of the accused.'

Higher authorities agreed with Hill's assessment and one month later all sentences were reduced, although not as much as requested. In February 1944, most of these sentences were validated although one man was released and five sentences were further reduced.

Above: **The location of the shooting of Private Crossland.** *Below:* **The incident as reported in the June 25 and 26 edition of the Lancashire Daily Post.**

NORTH-WEST CAMP INCIDENTS

UNITED STATES Army representatives had no statement to make, this morning, about incidents last night, at a camp at a small town in the North-West.

It is unofficially understood, however, that the situation is now completely under control, and that, contrary to local rumours, no one was killed.

It appears that the incidents originated when a white U.S. military policeman had occasion to remonstrate with five coloured soldiers, who, it is alleged, were behaving in a disorderly manner in a street.

COPPULL MAN FINED £50 IN CAR DRINK CASE

John T. Ashton, builder, contractor, and farmer, of Oakwood, Sunny Brow, Coppull, was, at Chorley, to-day, fined £50 for driving a motor-car while under the influence of drink, and ordered to pay £5 11s. witnesses' expenses. He was also fined £3 for driving [illegible] Wednesday [illegible] to appear, and a warrant was issued for his arrest.

FIGHT IN NORTH-WEST TOWN

AN investigation into a fight in a town in the North-West of England between military police and a small group of Negro soldiers was being conducted last night by the American military authorities in this country.

It is stated that two white American military police remonstrated with five coloured soldiers who, it is alleged, were behaving in a disorderly manner. Trouble occurred and one coloured soldier was injured. Five soldiers, white and coloured, were injured before the disturbance was quelled and the men taken back to camp.

One man, Private William Grosslands, a coloured man was stated to be seriously injured. First Lieutenant David D. Ousset was injured, but not seriously. The other enlisted men were not badly hurt, stated American headquarters.

No civilians were injured in the fighting, which did not take place in the centre of the town.

NEW FLEETWOOD DOCK LABOUR SCHEME

The dock labour scheme Fleetwood is being brought operation at mid-day to-morro was announced by the Minist Labour and National Se to-day.

The scheme means that workers will not be able to themselves whether they tu for work or not and they wi

In June 1944, one year after the original incident, 15 of the men were restored to duty. Six others had their sentences reduced to one year and, although the records of the other five are not available, two probably completed their six-month and one-year sentences. As the defendant with the longest sentence served thirteen months before being restored to duty (Sergeant Davis), we may assume that the other two also were restored to duty.

On the question of whether justice was served or not and was the trial fair, opinion is split. There were two black officers on the board but they were the lowest ranking of the eleven members. One defendant who was acquitted, termed it a 'kangaroo trial'. Another who was found guilty believes the charges exaggerated, counsel less than adequate and, in view of the facts, the trial and sentences completely overdone. A third soldier, also found guilty felt that the defense lawyers were good, but the sentences harsh. He believes those found guilty were scapegoats and he harbors the suspicion that the men were railroaded. One of the members of the court still thinks, however, that 'all members of the court bent over backwards for a fair trial and they (the defendants) received a fair trial. The defense was well-prepared and adequate; after all, the evidence from credible sources all agreed that there could only be one verdict . . . I think that justice was done and the sentences light under the circumstances . . . To condone such acts in World War II was, and still is, unthinkable regardless of what is being done now'.

The two prosecution lawyers agree that the trial was fair, the sentences were appropriate, the defense was very capable and a good job was done to keep the race issue out of the trial. One of the prosecutors believes, however, that the charges were excessive. A defense lawyer contends that the trial was fair and that the chief defense counsel was very able. Edwin D.

HEADQUARTERS
VIII AIR FORCE SERVICE COMMAND
OFFICE OF THE COMMANDING GENERAL
APO 633
U.S. ARMY

AAF-586.
14 September, 1943.

His Worshipful The Mayor,
Bamber Bridge,
Lancashire, England.

CONFIDENTIAL

Dear Sir:

I deeply regret the disturbance which occurred in your city on 24 June, 1943.

Privates William L. Ogletree, Eugene (NMI) Nunn, Lynn M. Adams and James H. Wise, of my Command, who were involved in the disturbance, have been tried and appropriately punished by General Court-Martial.

Incidents of this nature are most regrettable and I hope there will be no recurrence.

Sincerely,

HENRY J.F. MILLER,
Major General, U.S.A.,
Commanding.

Jones, the one black officer involved in the incident, was never asked to testify and was not allowed to talk with the defense attorney. He believes, 'it was not a fair trial and was nothing other than a kangaroo court.'

Although the records lose track of the men at this point (mid-1944), certainly their lives were changed by the shoot-out at Bamber Bridge. The Army would be different as well, for the incident was another indication, if that was needed, that the American Army's policy regarding black soldiers was deficient and that something had to be done to improve it.

An immediate result of the affair was the reorganization of all black units in the Eighth Army Air Force into a separate provisional organization on August 28, 1943. All field grade officers (majors, lieutenant colonels, and colonels) in the black units were replaced and a massive weeding-out of unfit company grade officers (second and first lieutenants, and captains) was undertaken. These measures, plus additional recreational facilities, rotation of pass days for black and white troops and the use of racially mixed MP patrols, appeared to ease the situation. Certainly statistics show a marked improvement in the performance of the black units.

However there were still to be further race problems in England during the remainder of the war. In September 1943, a number of blacks wounded two MPs in Launceston, Cornwall and a month later more coloured soldiers faced a court-martial for mutiny and attempted murder at Paignton, Devon. In February 1944, serious fighting broke out between blacks and troops of the 82nd Airborne Division at Leicester and, on October 5, 1944, the wife of a licensee was killed in crossfire between black and white GIs at Kingsclere near Newbury, Berkshire.

Except for odd modernisations, Station Road remains largely as it was, a fact confirmed to us by one of the few original residents still alive and living in the same house near the scene of the first incident, Mr. Joseph Baldwin. His wife Frances, who died about 1970, had appeared at the Chorley trial as an eye witness to the shooting of Private Ogletree immediately outside her house. It is important to remember when consulting our photographs and the testimony of the witnesses that the street was dark at the time in blackout conditions and that most residents were preparing or had already gone to bed. Mr. Baldwin was not at home when the fight occured and had been fetched from his work. When he arrived at his home, he saw bloodstains on the edge of the pavement, 'purple-coloured, not like ours' he recalled to the editor. Unfortunately the door of his house has been changed and so the damage caused by the fight, as reported by the local police, can no longer be seen. However Mr. Baldwin very kindly allowed us to take photographs of the street from his front room, from the exact spot where his wife and daughter, terrified, watched the fight — almost thirty-five years before to the exact day.

We examined all the other houses mentioned in the trial transcript as being marked by rifle fire but no visible damage could be positively identified today.

Starting at the Old Hob Inn, a beautiful, thatched, timbered pub beside the modernised A6/A49 junction, we treated ourselves to a ploughman's lunch in the same bar where the trouble started. Then, following the route of Nunn and Co, we walked on the right-hand pavement (now tarred but then constructed with paving stones) up Station Road past the Black Bull to the Mackenzie Arms. On the way we passed No. 331 from where military policeman, according to Mr. Baldwin, shot another black rioteer from the upstairs window.

Confirmation of this shooting, which must have been Crossland as his was the only death that night, came from one of the British policemen involved that we managed to trace but who wishes to remain anonymous. He told us that the MPs set up an ambush at each end of that part of Station Road (which is narrower than the rest with no side turnings) and even the British police were barred from entering. He saw what appeared to be a body lying in front of the shop across from No. 331,

Above: **The only building from Station 569 that still remains, appropriately used today by the Air Training Corps.** *Below:* **Private Crossland's grave (Plot F, Row 7, Grave 65) in the front row of the American War Cemetery at Madingly, Cambridge. According to the inscription, if correct, he must have died from wounds three days later.**

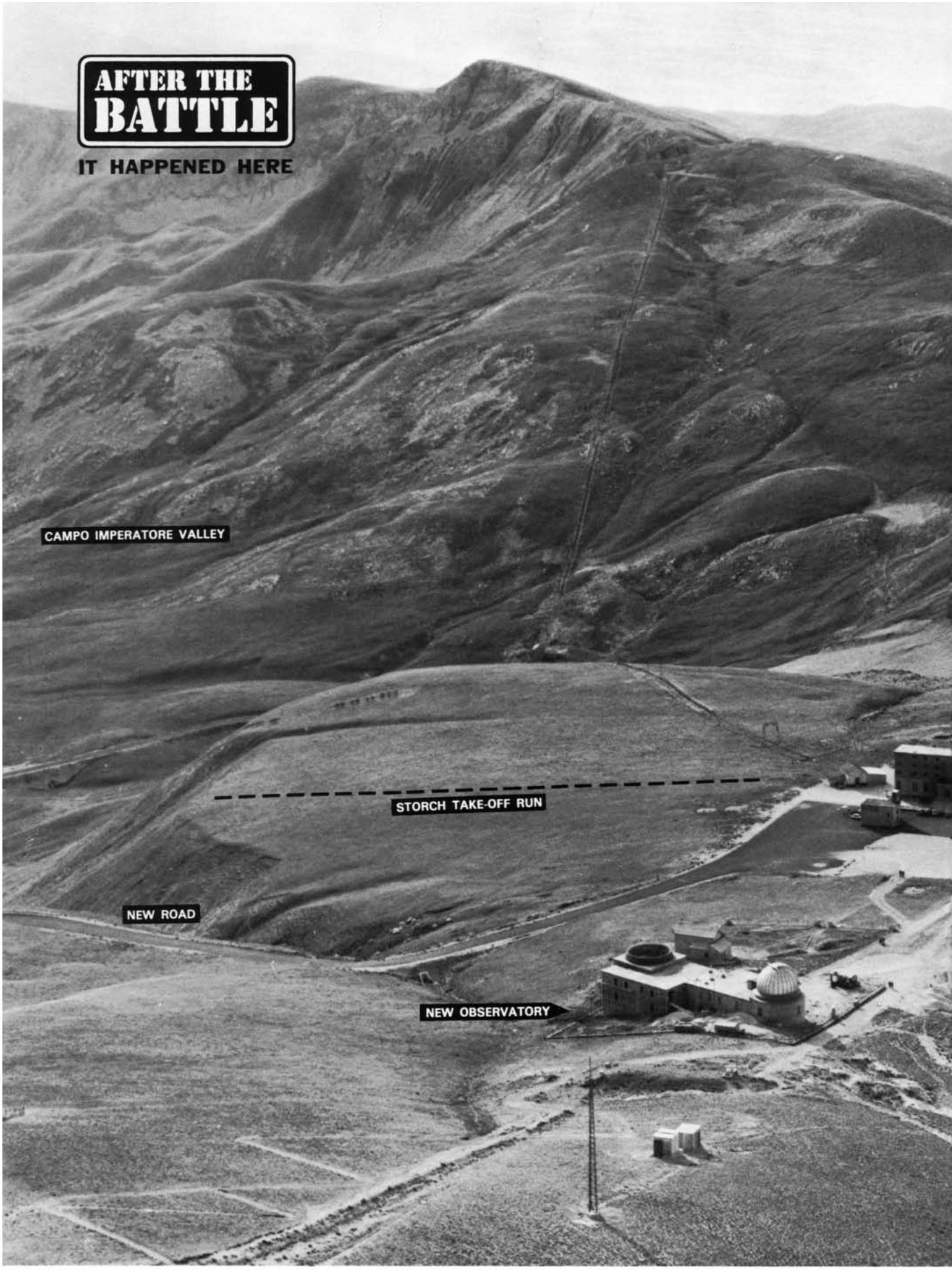
and was told by a GI that it was a dead negro. Mr. Baldwin told us that the MPs set up machine guns at either end and that he saw the body covered with a coat.

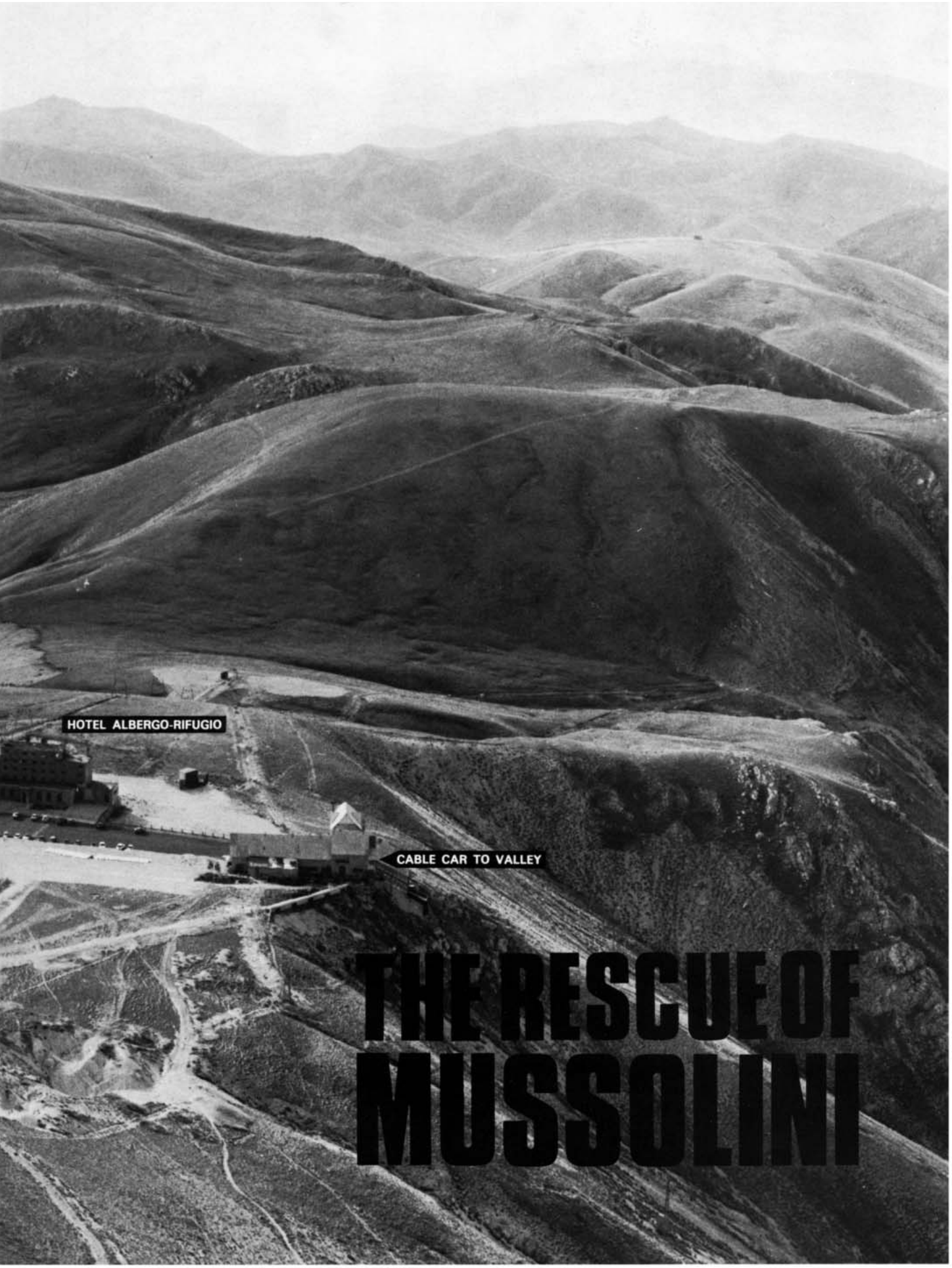
Also another unexplained discrepancy, which did not seem to have been examined at the trial with the closeness it deserved, was the fact that Ogletree was shot in the back. This evidence was given to the Board of Review on November 6, 1943 as follows: 'Ogletree was treated for his injuries at 2215 hours on 25 June 1943 at the dispensary of the 1511th Q.M. Truck Regt. (Avn). He was suffering from a gun-shot wound. The bullet entered Ogletree's body at a point in the center of the lower third of his back and made its exit in the front. Adams was also examined at the dispensary at the same approximate time and date. He had been wounded by a .45 caliber bullet entering his neck at the rear portion of the left side of his neck and exiting just behind his shoulder blade. Both Ogletree and Adams were hospitalized. Nunn's examinatiom followed that of Ogletree and Adams. He exhibited bruises about his ribs.'

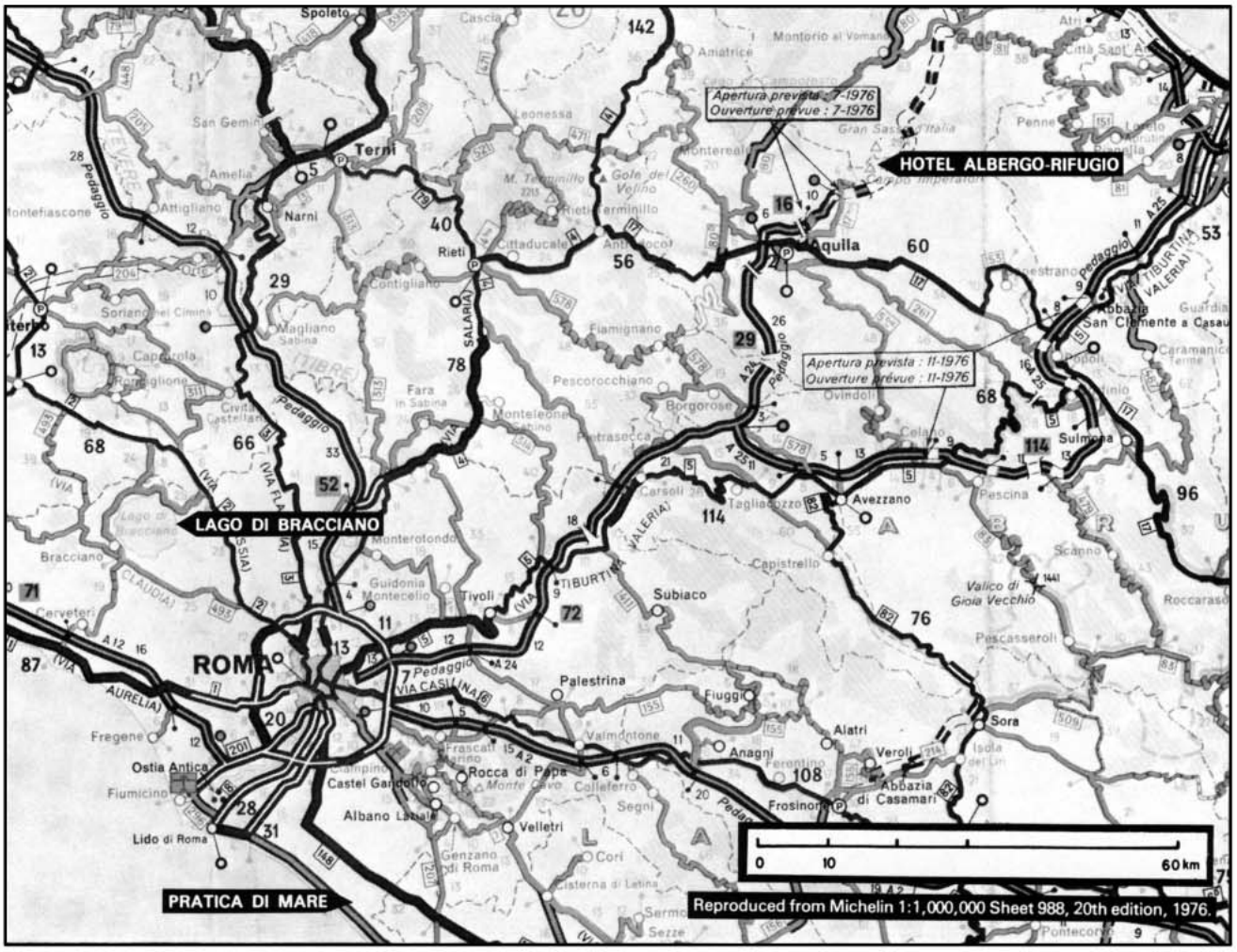
Around the scene of the fight which led to the mutiny, all the residents who appeared as witnesses at the trial have either died or moved away. Edward Brindle at No. 288 has died; William and Margaret Hunt at No. 317 have moved away and Emily Dimmock (from whose garden the stones were taken) has died, the house now being occupied by her son. James Thompson has gone from No. 331 (now occupied by Mr. and Mrs. Elleray); Isabella Duxbury's house is empty and Albert Cowley of No. 2 Edward Street has died. We tried to trace two of the ATS girls who dated black soldiers in 1943 but, perhaps all for the good after so many years, failed to do so.

Adams Hall was, as has been described earlier, an army camp at the far end of Mounsey Road. On the corner of the turning, the bank and No. 279, both of which received damage from bullets visible we were told for many years, showed no sign of the shooting, the bank being in the actual process of receiving a face lift.

Adams Hall camp became an emergency teacher training centre after the war until 1964 when the Salford office of the George Wimpey civil engineering company developed the land into a housing estate completely obliterating the old camp and roads and erecting 345 houses. Today, however one reminder still remains to be seen — one of the former huts used by the black soldiers of Station 569 has been retained by the local Air Training Corps. As it was the first building past the old houses in Mounsey Road, it could well have been the guardhouse to the camp — it would have been in the forefront of the mutiny and could not be a more fitting relic of the 'Battle of Bamber Bridge'.


AFTER THE BATTLE
IT HAPPENED HERE
CAMPO IMPERATORE VALLEY
STORCH TAKE-OFF RUN
NEW ROAD
NEW OBSERVATORY


HOTEL ALBERGO-RIFUGIO
CABLE CAR TO VALLEY
THE RESCUE OF MUSSOLINI



On July 25, 1943, King Victor Emmanuel III dismissed Benito Mussolini, dictator of Italy since 1924. Of the twenty-eight members of the Grand Council, nineteen Fascist rebels had voted for the restoration of a constitutional monarchy and the King had appointed Maresciallo Pietro Badoglio as head of the new Italian Government. Mussolini was placed under arrest and exiled first to the island of Ponza, about twenty miles from the Italian coast south of Rome, and later to the more secure naval base on the island of Maddalena on the north-eastern corner of Sardinia.

When news of Mussolini's downfall reached Hitler, then at FHQu Wolfsschanze at Rastenburg in East Prussia, he made immediate plans to help his former ally. On July 26, the day after Mussolini's arrest, SS-Hauptsturmfuehrer Otto Skorzeny of the Waffen SS was summoned from Berlin to see the Fuehrer. At a private meeting with Hitler, Skorzeny was given the task of rescuing the Duce. The operation would be mounted under the overall command of Generalleutnant Kurt Student, Commander of the XI Fleiger Korps of the Luftwaffe.

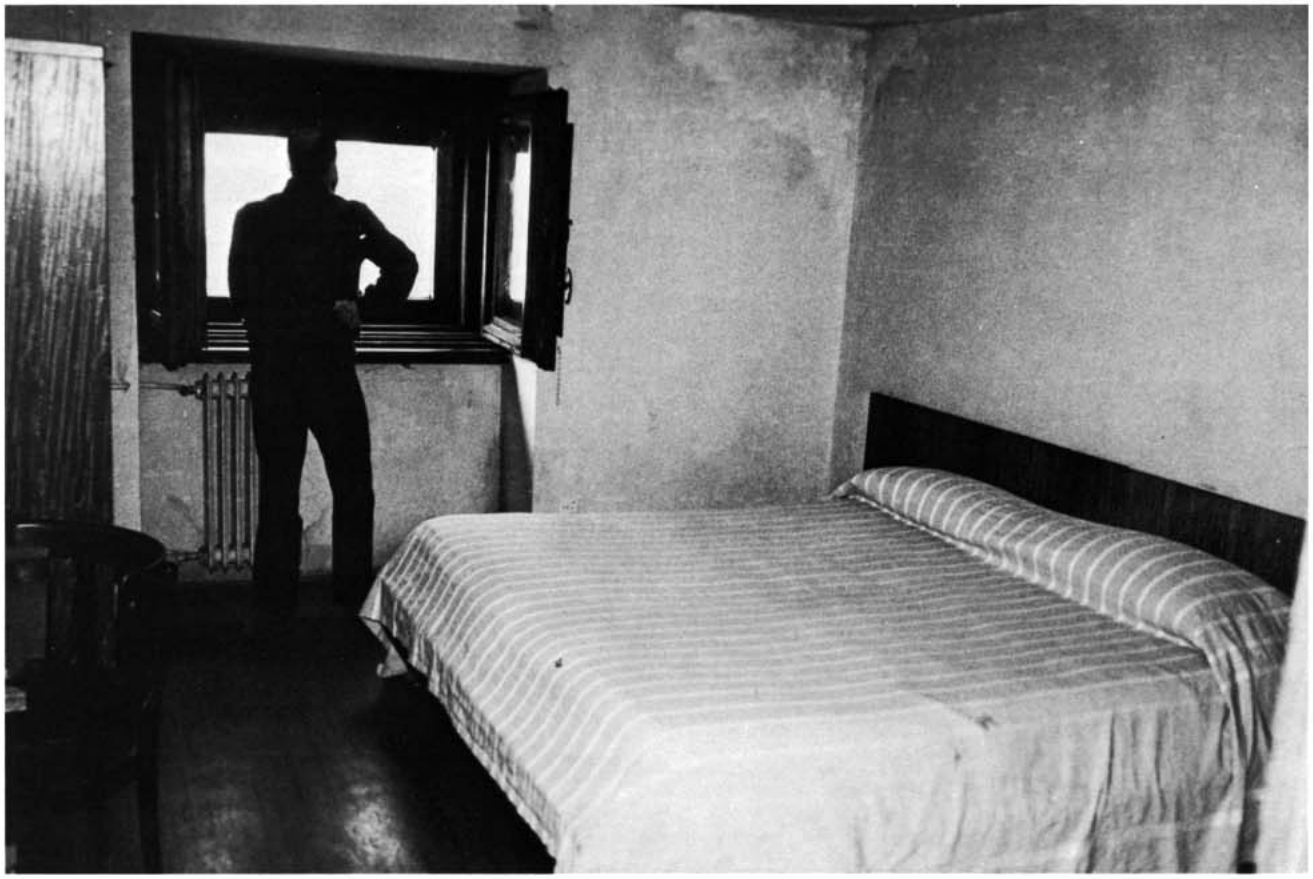
The first problem facing Skorzeny was to discover exactly where Mussolini was being held. Because of the necessity to keep the operation secret, enquiries in Italy had to be discreet as the Germans were aware that the new Badoglio government would be anxious to make peace with the Allies.

On July 27, Skorzeny flew to Rome with Generalleutnant Student, ostensibly as his orderly officer. A base was established at Frascati, south-east of Rome, which was also the location of the headquarters for the German forces in Italy. Apart from fifty hand-picked men of Skorzeny's own SS unit, additional reinforcements for the operation were provided by the 1. Fallschirmjaeger Division. The unit began to arrive at Pratica di Mare aerodrome, near the coast just south of Rome, on the 28th ready to take over the defence of the city in case of the defection of the Badoglio government.

Assisted by SS-Obersturmbannfuehrer Herbert Kappler, head of the SD in Rome *(arrested and tried after the war for the massacre of 335 Italians in March 1944)*, Skorzeny and his second in command, Karl Radl, began the search for Mussolini.

The trail in Rome was now cold and for several days they got nowhere. Then Kappler

When he arrived in the Gran Sasso mountains at mid-day on August 28, 1943, Mussolini was first imprisoned in La Villetta, a small chalet owned by an Italian countess Rosa Mascitelli. When the carabiniere arrived the guardian, a barber Ugo Raponi from L'Aquila, refused to hand over the keys until the countess had given her permission. The restaurant was added in 1951.



In a characteristic 'Mussolini-style' pose, the editor's Italian interpreter/guide Sergio Andreanelli enjoys standing in for Il Duce in the bedroom of suite No. 201/202.

discovered the location of the carabinieri barracks to which the Duce had first been taken in Rome and, a few days later, it was established that, Mussolini had been taken to Ponza. However each time the Germans followed up a lead they found themselves a few days too late. When Skorzeny learned that Mussolini had been transferred to Maddalena, he set out himself on August 18 in a Heinkel 111 on a reconnaissance flight — only to be shot down en route by Allied fighters. Rescued from the sea by an Italian anti-aircraft ship, his next attempt to reconnoitre the island was dressed as a sailor as a crew member of an E-Boat flotilla on an 'official visit'. On August 26, although he managed to approach and land on the island without arousing undue suspicion, he found he had arrived just a few hours too late as Mussolini had been removed by a Red Cross seaplane only that morning. Scared of a German rescue attempt when a German aircraft flew low over the island the previous day, the Italians had moved fast to protect their prisoner.

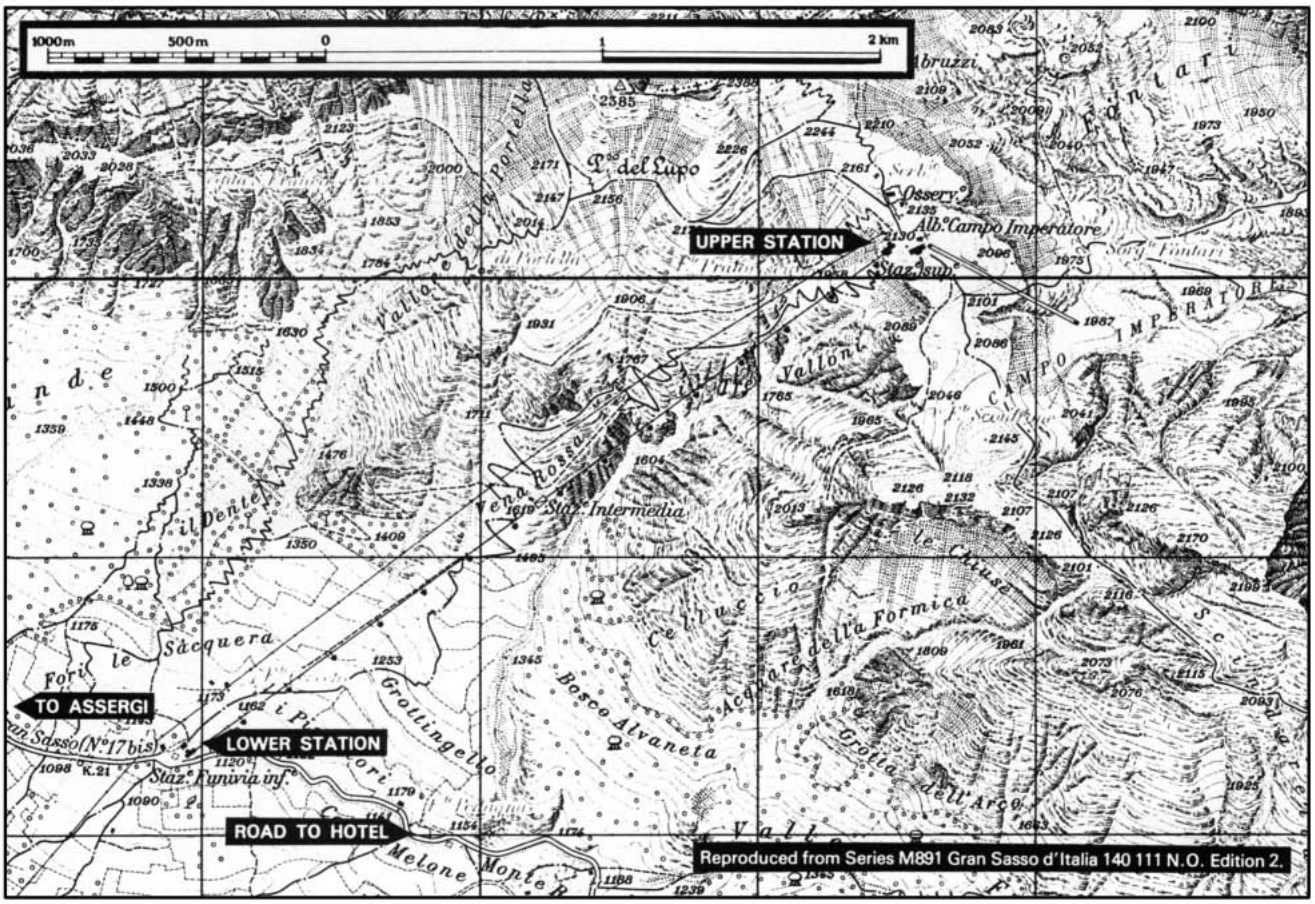
Back to square one, Skorzeny returned to Rome. Quite by chance, during an inspection tour with Generalleutnant Student, it was discovered that a white seaplane had landed on Lago di Bracciano twenty miles north-west of Rome close to the foothills of the Apennine mountains. Further clues directed the search to the Abruzzi range. Then Kappler had a stroke of luck when he intercepted a message routed to the Italian Ministry of Home Affairs. It read: Security measures around Gran Sasso completed'.

'For days on end we made great efforts to acquire accurate maps of that region', wrote Skorzeny later, 'but in vain. An hotel had been built on the mountain only a few years before the war but was not shown on any military maps, or even on the latest mountaineering maps. The only information we obtained was the description given by a German living in Italy who in 1938 had spent a winter holiday in this ski hotel, then quite new. Another, but very vague, source of information was the advertisement of a travel agency extolling the beauties of this skiing paradise in the Abruzzi.'

Mussolini had, in fact, been driven straight to the Gran Sasso mountain after the seaplane had landed at Lake Bracciano on August 28. As his intended new home, the Hotel Albergo-Rifugio, standing on a small plateau 3,000ft above the nearest road reached only by cable car, was still full of guests, the Duce was held instead in the La Villetta inn beside the lower cable-car station. There he occupied a second floor room until the hotel above had been evacuated and, at the beginning of September, was transferred to his new quarters.

The Hotel Albergo-Rifugio was the ideal hideaway, a ready-made prison without bars. As the only approach was via the cable car, both ends of which were guarded by carabinieri, the Italian guards could relax a little more comfortably knowing their charge was now secure. There Mussolini occupied a small suite of rooms on the second floor, No. 201, consisting of a bedroom, sitting room, bathroom and toilet. More a guest than a

When Mussolini was about to be moved up the mountain, he was not very happy about the cable car and nervously asked the operator Remo Lalli: ''Are you sure there is nothing wrong with it ? . . . Naturally it is not for me, I am thinking of the others.' One of the original cable cars (replaced in 1965) beside the upper station.



prisoner, he was well looked after and the manageress of the hotel, Signora Flavia Jurato, fed Mussolini as well as his strict diet would allow. It was here, on September 8, that Mussolini received the news of the Italian armistice and where he learned that one of its conditions was that he was to be handed over to the Allies.

On the same day, Skorzeny, positive that he now knew the location of the Duce, carried out a photographic sortie over the hotel to help plan the rescue operation. However it was only after the flight was underway that it was realised that the automatic camera fitted to the He111 was out of action. Nevertheless Skorzeny pressed on, intending to take pictures himself using a hand camera. In order not to alert the guards at the hotel, the pilot was ordered to fly at 5,000 metres, the hotel itself being at 2,112 metres. At this height the cold was intense, more so as Skorzeny (and on the return trip Karl Radl) had to lean out of the aircraft in the icy slipstream to operate the hand camera. Although the resulting oblique pictures were poor, smudgy and lacking detail, Skorzeny had visually observed one piece of fairly flat ground lying behind the hotel.

'On the suitability of this meadow as a landing-ground' wrote Skorzeny in his biography 'we based our whole plan and I accordingly drew up detailed orders for the individual parties.

'A ground operation seemed hopeless from the start' continued Skorzeny. 'An attack up the steep, rocky slopes would have cost us very heavy losses, apart from giving good notice to the enemy and leaving them time to conceal their prisoner. To forestall that eventuality the whole massif would have to be surrounded by good mountain troops. A division at least would be required. So a ground operation was ruled out.

'As the factor of surprise could be our only trump as it was to be feared that the prisoner's

The hotel on its isolated plateau was a perfect prison, almost impregnable to a ground assault. This is the view looking down the south-western valley from the upper to lower station of the cable car.

guards had orders to kill him if there was any danger of rescue, there remained only two alternatives — parachute landings or gliders.

'We pondered long over both and then decided in favour of the second. At such altitudes, and in the thin air, a parachute drop would involve too rapid a rate of descent for anyone equipped with the normal parachute. We also feared that in this rocky region the parachutists would get scattered too widely, so that an immediate attack by a compact detachment would not be possible. Therefore a glider landing remained the only solution.

'Generalleutnant Student suggested that a parachute battalion infiltrate by night into the valley and seize the lower station of the funicular at the hour appointed for the landing. In that way we should have cover on that side and also a line of retreat if withdrawal became necessary after the operation was complete.

'After careful consideration, Generalleutnant Student gave his final approval and issued his orders: The twelve DFS 230 gliders required are to be flown from the south of France to Rome at once. I fix 6.00 a.m. on September 12 as zero-hour. At that moment the machines must land on the plateau and the funicular station be seized by our battalion. We can assume that at that early hour the dangerous air currents so common in Italian mountain regions will be relatively weak. I will instruct the pilots personally and impress upon them the importance of the utmost care in landing.

'After this decision had been given Radl and I worked out the details of our plan,' explained Skorzeny. 'We had to make careful calculations of the distances, make up our minds as to what arms and equipment the men should carry and, above all, prepare a large-scale plan showing the exact landing-place for each of the twelve gliders. Each glider could take ten men, i.e., a group, in addition to the pilot. Each group must know exactly what it had to do. I decided that I would go myself in the third glider so that the immediate assult by my own and the fourth group could be covered by the two groups already landed.

'Even without any casualties we should only be 108 men and they could not all be available at the same moment. They would have to tackle 150 Italians, who knew the ground perfectly and could use the hotel as a fortress. In weapons the two opponents could be regarded as approximately equals, as our Fallschirmjaeger Gewehr automatic rifles gave us an advantage, compensating to some extent for the enemy's superiority in numbers, particularly if we had not suffered too badly at the outset.

'One more thought occurred to me: how could we increase the effect of surprise, obviously our most potent weapon? We racked our brains for a long time and then Radl suddenly had a bright idea: Why not take with us an Italian officer, someone who must be reasonably well known to the carabinieri up there? His very presence will bluff the guards for a short time and restrain them from immediately reacting to our arrival by violence against the Duce.

'This was an excellent idea, which I promptly approved and considered how best to exploit. Generalleutnant Student must confer with the officer in question during the evening before the operation and somehow persuade him to come with us. To prevent leakage or betrayal, he must remain with us until the following morning.

'The selected Italian officer, Generale Soleti, appeared punctually but had to be politely put off till the next day and invited to a conference with Generalleutnant Student for 8.00 p.m. at the Practica di Mare airfield. Zero-hour had to be postponed, as we received news that the gliders could not arrive in Rome before the early hours of the 12th.

Cloud forming over the upper station, literally from nowhere, gives a graphic illustration of the hazardous nature of the glider operation.

Generalleutnant Student fixed it for 2.00 p.m. on the Sunday (September 12) as we certainly could not wait another twenty-four hours. This postponement involved awkward changes in our plans and further prejudiced our chances. Owing to the air currents and local winds to be anticipated in the middle of the day the landing would be more dangerous, and the fact that the assault was to be made at 2.00 p.m. (i.e., in broad daylight) set a difficult task for the detachment operating in the valley. Various changes were necessary and had to be made with the utmost speed.

'In the afternoon of the Saturday I visited the garden of a monastery in Frascati where my own men and the Mors battalion (who were to attack the lower funicular station) had pitched their tents. For this enterprise I meant to take volunteers only and I had no intention of keeping them in the dark as to the dangers involved. I had them paraded and made a short speech: "The long waiting-time is over. We have an important job to do to-morrow. Adolf Hitler has ordered it personally. Serious losses must be anticipated and, unfortunately, cannot be avoided. I shall of course lead you and can promise you that I will do my utmost. If we all stick together the assault will and must succeed. Anyone prepared to volunteer take one step forward!"

'It gave me the greatest pleasure to see that not one of my men wanted to be left behind. To my officers and Leutnant von Berlepsch, commanding the parachute company, I left the disagreeable task of refusing some of them, as the party must not exceed 108 in all. I myself selected 18 of my Waffen SS men.

'Sunday, September 12, 1943. At 5.00 a.m. we marched in close order to the airfield at Prataca di Mare. There we learned that the gliders were expected at 10.00 a.m.

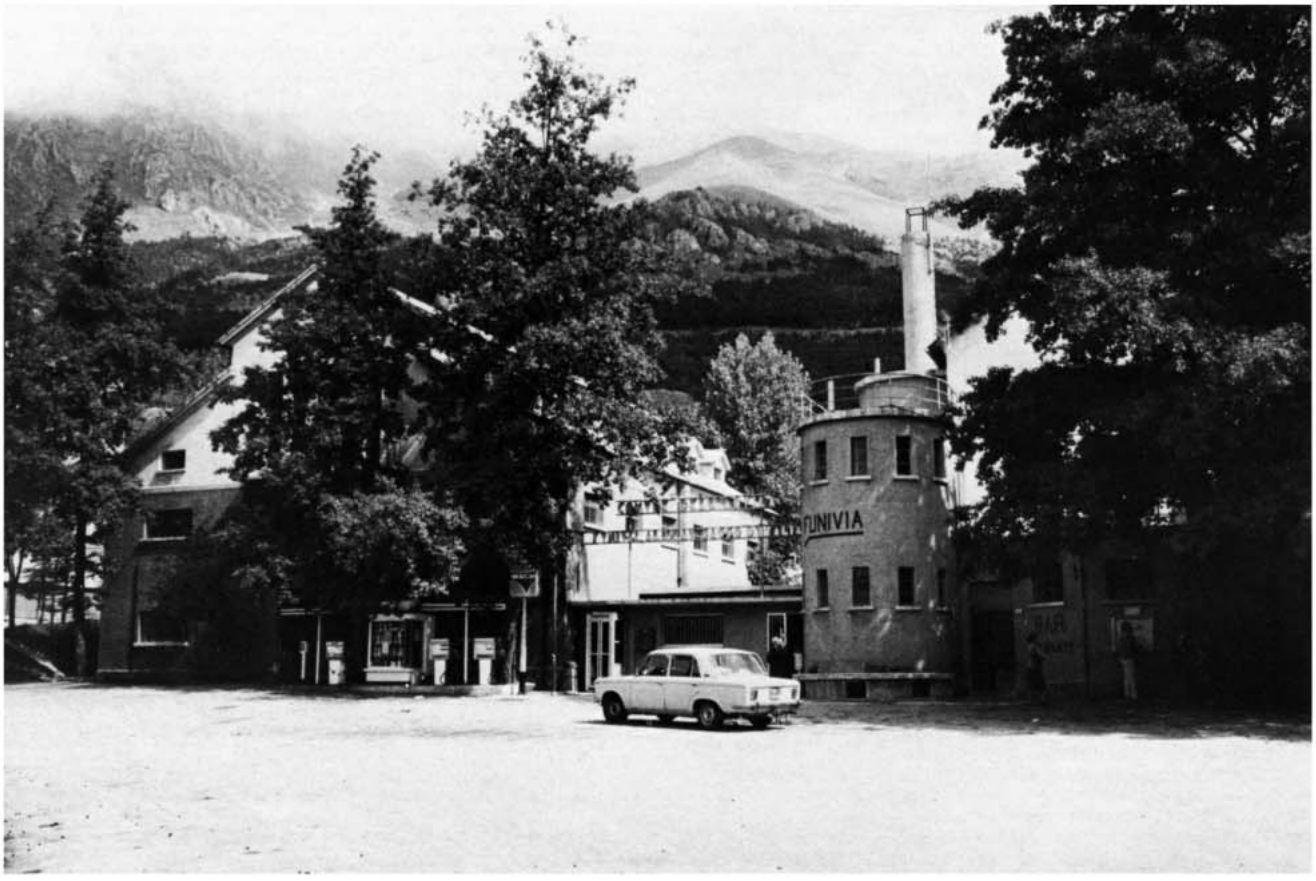
'I again inspected the equipment of my men, who were all wearing parachute uniform. Parachute rations for five days had been issued. I had arranged that several boxes of fruit should be sent up and we sat about, pleasantly idle, in the shade of the buildings and trees. There was an atmosphere of tension, of course, but we took care to prevent any manifestation of apprehension or nerves.

By 8.00 a.m., the Italian officer had not showed up so I had to send Radl off to Rome, telling him that the man had to be produced, alive, in double quick time. The trusty Radl duly produced him, though he had the greatest difficulty in finding him in the city.

'Generalleutnant Student had a short talk with him in my presence, Leutnant Warger acting as interpreter. We told him of Adolf Hitler's request for his participation in the operation, with a view to minimizing the chance of bloodshed. The officer was greatly flattered by this personal request from the head of the German state and found it impossible to refuse. He agreed, thereby placing an important trump in our hands.

This is the underground tunnel which leads from the cable station directly inside the hotel, some fifty yards distant.

THE RECONSTRUCTION. A few days after the successful rescue, a German propaganda unit arrived to re-stage and film the operation. By this time, Skorzeny and the 26 members of his Waffen SS detachment had departed so only Fallschirmjaeger troops appear in the photographs. *Below:* **The lower cable car station which has changed little in thirty-four years.**



'About eleven the first gliders came in. The towing planes were quickly refuelled and the coupled aircraft drawn up in the order in which they were to start. Generalleutnant Student dismissed the men of von Berlepsch's company and then my men.

'The pilots and the twelve group commanders were summoned to an inner room, where Generalleutnant Student made a short speech in which he again laid great stress on the absolute necessity for a smooth landing. He categorically forbade crash landings, in view of the danger involved.

'I then gave the glider commanders detailed instructions and drew a sketch on a blackboard showing the exact landing-place of each craft, after which I cleared up all outstanding points with the commanders of each group and explained the tasks allotted to them. The men had decided on their password, something guaranteed to shift all obstacles. It was "Take it easy", and that battle-cry remained the watchword of the SS commandos right up to the end of the war.

'Flying times, altitudes and distances were then discussed with Hauptmann Langguth, the Intelligence officer of the Parachute Corps who had been on the photographic expedition with us. He was to take his place in the first towing plane as, apart from Radl and myself, he alone knew the appearance of the ground from the air. The flying time for the 100 kilometres to be covered would be approximately one hour, so it was essential that we should start at 1.00 p.m. prompt.

'At 12.30 p.m. there was a sudden air-raid warning. Enemy bombers were reported and before long we were hearing bomb bursts quite near. We all took cover and I cursed at the prospect of the whole enterprise being knocked on the head at the last moment. The raid ended just before 1.00 p.m. We rushed out on to the tarmac and noticed several craters, though our gliders were unharmed. The men raced out to their aircraft and I gave the order to emplane, inviting Generale Soleti to sit in front of me on the narrow board, which was all that was available in the cramped space into which we were packed like herrings. There was in fact hardly any room for our weapons.

'I gave the signal to start. The engines began to roar and we were soon gliding along the tarmac and then rising into the air. We were off. We slowly gained altitude in wide circles and the procession of gliders set course towards the north-east. The weather seemed almost ideal for our purpose. Vast banks of white cloud hung lazily at about 3,000 metres. If they did not disperse we should reach our target practically unobserved and drop out of the sky before anyone realized we were there.

'The interior of the glider was most unpleasantly hot and stuffy. I suddenly noticed that the corporal sitting behind me was being sick and that the Generale had turned as green as his uniform. Flying obviously did not suit him; he certainly was not enjoying himself. The pilot reported our position as best he could and I carefully followed his indications on my map, noting when we passed over Tivoli. From the inside of the glider we could see little of the country as the cellophane side-windows were too thick and the gaps in the fabric (of which there were many) too narrow to give us any view.

'We thrust through a thick bank of clouds to reach the altitude of 3,500 metres which had been specified. For a short time we were in a dense grey world, seeing nothing of our surroundings, and then we emerged into bright sunshine, leaving the clouds below us. At that moment the pilot of our towing machine, a Henschel, came through on the telephone to the commander of my glider: "Flights 1 and 2 no longer ahead of us. Who's to take over the lead now?"

'This was bad news. What had happened to them? At that time I did not know that I also had only seven machines instead of nine behind me. Two had fallen foul of a couple of bomb craters at the very start. I had a message put through: "We'll take over the lead ourselves!"

'I got out my knife and slashed right and left in the fabric to make a hole big enough to give us something of a view. My peephole was enough to let us get our bearings when the cloud permitted. We had to be very smart in picking up bridges, roads, river bends and other geographical features on our maps. Even so, we had to correct our course from time to time. Our excursion should not fail through going astray. I did not dwell on the thought that we should be without covering fire when we landed.

'It was just short of zero-hour when I recognized the valley of Aquila below us and also the leading vehicles of our own formation hastening along it. The pilot turned in a wide circle, searching the ground — as I was doing — for the flat meadow appointed as our landing-ground. But a ghastly surprise was in store for us. It was triangular all right, but so far from being flat it was very steep — it could even have been a ski-jump!

'We were now much nearer the rocky plateau than when we were photographing it and the conformation of the ground was more fully revealed. It wasy easy to see that a landing on this "meadow" was out of the question. My pilot, Leutnant Meyer, must also have realized that the situation was critical, as I caught him looking all round. I was faced with a ticklish decision. If I obeyed the express orders of my General I should abandon the operation and try to glide down to the valley. If I was not prepared to do so, the forbidden crash-landing was the only alternative.

'It did not take me long to decide. I called out: "Crash landing! As near to the hotel as you can get!" The pilot, not hesitating for a second, tilted the starboard wing and down we came with a rush. I wondered for a moment whether the glider could take the strain in the thin air, but there was little time for speculation. With the wind shrieking in our ears we approached our target. I saw Leutnant Meyer release the parachute brake, and then followed a crash and the noise of shattering wood. I closed my eyes and stopped thinking. One last mighty heave, and we came to rest. *(According to von Berlepsch, the crash landing was caused by Skorzeny who was 'moving inside the glider too much' Ed.).*

'The bolt of the exit hatch had been wrenched away, the first man was out like a shot and I let myself fall sideways out of the glider clutching my weapons. We were within

Above: **The land for the hotel was given to the town of L'Aquila by the Marchese Alfonso Dragonetti de Torres on August 15, 1940 — the 17th year of the founding of the Fascist state.** *Below:* **Except for the Italian Air Force radar installation on the roof, the hotel itself has also changed little in three decades. This is the rear view.**

15 metres of the hotel! We were surrounded by jagged rocks of all sizes, which may have nearly smashed us up but had also acted as a brake so that we had taxied barely 20 metres. The parachute brake now folded up immediately behind the glider.

'The first Italian sentry was standing on the edge of a slight rise at one corner of the hotel. He seemed lost in amazement. I had no time to bother about our Italian passenger, though I had noticed him falling out of the glider at my side, but rushed straight up to the hotel. I was glad that I had given the order that no one must fire a shot before I did. It was essential that the surprise should be complete. I could hear my men panting behind me. I knew that they were the pick of the bunch and would stick to me like glue and ask no explanations.

'We reached the hotel. All the surprised and shocked sentry required was a shout of

This could most probably be Skorzeny's own glider as we established that its position lies close by the hotel.

''Mani in alto!'' (hands up). Passing through an open door, we spotted an Italian soldier engaged in using a wireless set. A hasty kick sent his chair flying from under him and a few hearty blows from my rifle wrecked his apparatus. On finding that the room had no exit

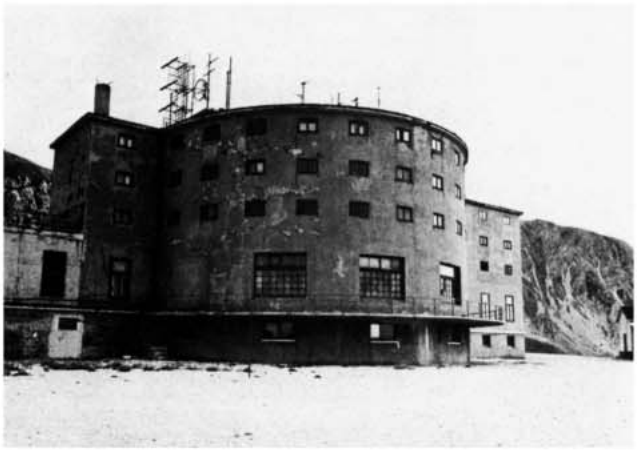
into the interior of the hotel we hastily retraced our steps and went outside again.

'We raced along the facade of the building and round the corner, to find ourselves faced with a terrace two and a half to three metres high. Rottenfuehrer Himmel offered me his back and I was up and over in a trice. The others followed in a bunch.

'My eyes swept the facade and lit on a well-known face at one of the windows of the first storey. It was the Duce! Now I knew that our effort had not been in vain! I yelled at him: "Away from the window!" and we rushed into the entrance hall, colliding with a lot of Italian soldiers pouring out. Two machine-guns were set up on the floor of the terrace. We jumped over them and put them out of action. The carabinieri continued to stream out and it took a few far from gentle blows from my weapon to force a way through them. My men yelled out "Mani in alto!". So far no one had fired a shot.

'I was now well inside the hall. I could not look round or bother about what was happening behind me. On the right was a staircase. I leaped up it, three steps at a time, and flung open a door ahead of me. It was a happy choice. Mussolini and two Italian officers were standing in the middle of the room. I thrust them aside and made them

A series of photographs to illustrate Skorzeny's route from his glider to the hotel entrance. *Above:* The crash site lies between the hotel and the new garage. The radio room door is visible past the second window.



Skorzeny ran around the back of the hotel . . .

. . . before reaching the raised forecourt on the left . . .

. . . along the front (Mussolini's windows arrowed) . . .

. . . and into the entrance hall and up the stairs in the corner.

stand with their backs to the door. In a moment Untersturmfuehrer Schwerdt appeared. He took the situation in at a glance and jostled the mightily-surprised Italian officers out of the room and into the corridor. The door closed behind us.

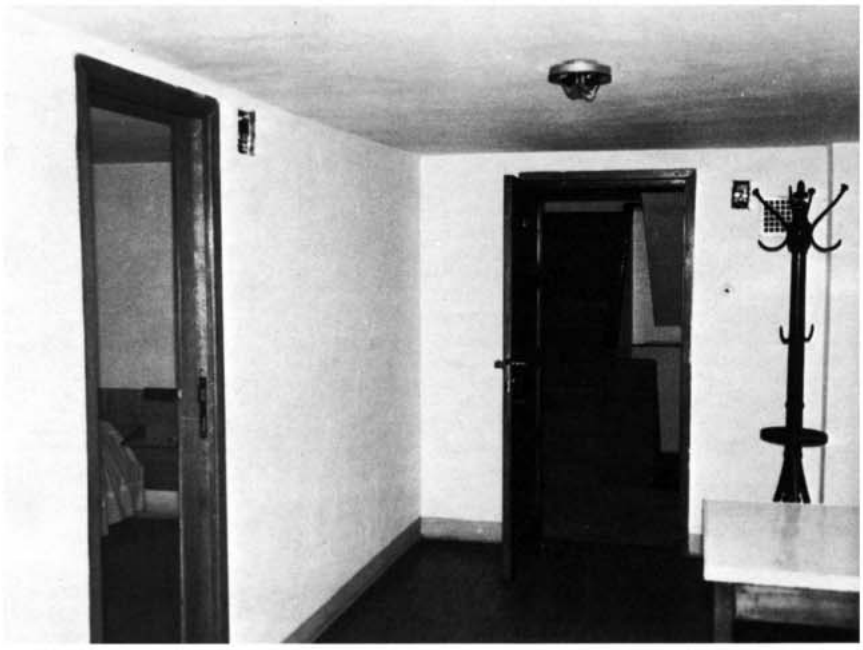
'We had succeeded in the first part of our venture. The Duce was safely in our hands. Not more than three or four minutes had passed since we arrived! *(Other reports state twelve minutes Ed.)*

'At that moment the heads of Holzer and Benz, two of my subordinates, appeared at the window. They had not been able to force their way through the crowd in the hall and so had been compelled to join me via the lightning-conductor. I sent them to guard the corridor.

'I went to the window and saw Radl and his SS men running towards the hotel. Behind them crawled Obersturmfuehrer Menzel, the company commander of our Friedenthal special unit and in charge of glider No. 4 behind me. His glider had grounded about 100 metres from the hotel and he had broken his ankle on landing. The third group in glider No. 5 also arrived while I was watching.

'I shouted out: "Everything's all right! Mount guard everywhere!"

'I stayed a little while longer to watch gliders 6 and 7 crash-land with Leutnant von Berlepsch and his parachute company. Then before my very eyes followed a tragedy. Glider 8 must have been caught in a gust; it wobbled



Above: **The stairs to Suite 201 and** *(right)* **Mussolini's view as the Germans burst in the room.**

and then fell like a stone, landed on a rocky slope and was smashed to smithereens.

'Sounds of firing could now be heard in the distance and I put my head into the corridor and shouted for the officer-in-command at the hotel. A colonel appeared from nearby and I summoned him to surrender forthwith, assuring him that any further resistance was useless. He asked me for time to consider the matter. I gave him one minute, during which time Radl turned up. He had had to fight his way through and I assumed that the Italians were still holding the entrance, as no one had joined us.

'The Italian colonel returned, carrying a goblet of red wine which he proffered to me with a slight bow and the words: "To the victor!" A white bedspread, hung from the window, performed the functions of a white flag.

'After giving a few orders to my men outside the hotel I was able to devote attention to Mussolini, who was standing in a corner with Untersturmfuehrer Schwerdt in front of him. I introduced myself: "Duce, the Fuehrer has sent me! You are free!"

'Mussolini embraced me: "I knew my friend Adolf Hitler would not leave me in the lurch," he said.

'The surrender was speedily carried out. The Italian other ranks had to deposit their arms in the dining-room of the hotel, but I allowed the officers to keep their revolvers. I learned that we had captured a general in addition to the colonel.

'I was informed by telephone that the

Above: **Il Duce emerges from the hotel. On his left is Inspector of Police Guiseppe Gueli and behind them Generale Soleti, the hostage who arrived in the glider with Skorzeny. Major Mors, who arrived via the cable car, is on the extreme left. (Bundesarchiv).** *Right:* **The tatty entrance as it is today. Construction of the road to the hotel in 1968 has increased the flow of visitors.**

station of the funicular had also fallen undamaged into our hands. There had been a little fighting, but the troops had arrived to the second and in complete surprise.

'Leutnant von Berlepsch had already replaced his monocle when I called to him from the window and gave orders that reinforcements must be sent up by the funicular. I wanted to make assurance doubly sure and also show the Italian colonel that we also had troops in the valley. I then had our wireless truck in the valley called up on the telephone with instructions to send out a message to Generalleutnant Student that the operation had succeeded. The first to arrive by the funicular was Major Mors, commanding the parachute formation in the valley.

'I was now responsible for Mussolini and my first anxiety was how we were to get him to Rome. Our plan had provided for three possibilities.

'Both he and I considered that it would be too dangerous to travel 150 kilometres by road through an area which had not been occupied by German troops since the defection of Italy. I had therefore agreed with Generalleutnant Student that Plan A should be the sudden coup de main against the Italian airfield of L'Aquila di Abruzzi, at the entrance to the valley. We should hold it only a short time. I would give the zero-hour for this attack by wireless and a few minutes later three German He111s would land. One of them would pick up the Duce and myself and leave at once, while the two others gave us cover and drew off any aircraft pursuing.

'Plan B provided that a Fieseler Storch should land in one of the meadows adjoining the valley station and Plan C was for Hauptmann Gerlach to attempt a landing with the Fieseler Storch on the plateau itself.

'Our wireless truck got through to Rome with the report of our success but, when I had fixed up a new timetable with Leutnant von Berlepsch and tried to give the parachutists the zero-hour, 4.00 p.m. for the attack on the airfield, we found we could not make contact. That was the end of Plan A.

'I had watched the landing of one of the Fieseler Storchs in the valley through my glasses. I at once used the telephone of the funicular to have the pilot instructed to prepare to take off again at once. The answer came back that the aircraft had suffered some damage on landing and could not be ready straight away. So only the last and most dangerous alternative, Plan C, remained.

'After they had been disarmed, the Italian other ranks showed themselves extremely helpful and some of them had joined with the men we had sent out to rescue the victims of the glider crash. Through our glasses we had seen some of them moving, so that we could hope that it had not been fatal to all its occupants. Other carabinieri now helped in clearing a small strip. The biggest boulders were hastily removed, while Hauptmann Gerlach circled overhead and waited for the agreed signal to land. He proved himself a master in the art of emergency landing but, when I told him how we proposed to make a getaway with his help, he was anything but pleased with the prospect and, when I added that there would be three of us, he said bluntly that the idea was impracticable.'

'I had to take him aside for a short but tense discussion. The strength of my arguments convinced him at last. I had indeed considered every aspect of the matter most carefully and fully realized my heavy responsibility in joining the other two. But could I possibly justify letting the Duce go alone with Gerlach? If there was a disaster, all that was left for me was a bullet from my own pistol: Adolf Hitler would never forgive such an end to our venture. As there was no other way of getting the Duce safely to Rome it was better to share the danger with him, even though my presence added to it. If we failed, the same fate would overtake us all.

Above: **The bulky frame of Skorzeny is unmistakable although unusually dressed in a tropical Luftwaffe tunic as were all his men on Operation 'Eiche' ('Oak').** *Below:* **A vicar and party are rather curious to know why they are the centre of attraction.**

'In this critical hour I did not fail to consult my trusty friend, Radl. I then discussed with him and Major Mors the question of how we were to get back. The only men we wanted to take with us were the general and the colonel, and we must get them to Rome as soon as possible. The carabinieri and their officers could be left at the hotel. The Duce had told me that he had been properly treated, so that there was no reason not to be generous. My pleasure at our success was so great that I wanted to spare my opponents.

'To guard against sabotage to the cable railway I ordered that two Italian officers should ride in each cage and that after we had got away the machinery should be damaged sufficiently to prevent its being put in working order again for some time. All other details I left to Major Mors.

'Donning a loose winter overcoat and a dark, soft hat, the Duce came out of the door. I went ahead to the waiting Storch. Mussolini took the rear seat and I stowed myself in behind. I noticed his slight hesitation before he climbed in and recollected that he was a pilot himself and could well appreciate the risk he was running.

'The engine worked up to full speed and we nodded to the comrades we were leaving behind. I seized a stay in each hand and by moving my body up and down, tried to give the aircraft more thrust or lessen the weight. Gerlach signalled the men holding the wings and tail to let go and the airscrew drew us forward. I thought I heard a mixture of "Evvivas" and "Heils" through the cellophane windows.

'However, although our speed increased and we were rapidly approaching the end of the strip, we failed to rise. I swayed about madly and we had hopped over many a boulder when a yawning gully appeared right in our path. I was just thinking that this really was the end when our bird suddenly rose into the air. I breathed a silent prayer of thanksgiving!

'Then the left wheel hit the ground again, the machine tipped downwards and we made straight for the gully. Veering left, we shot over the edge. I closed my eyes, held my

breath and again awaited the inevitable end. The wind roared in our ears.

'It must have been all over in a matter of seconds, for when I looked round again Gerlach had got the machine out of its dive and almost on a level keel. Now we had sufficient air speed, even in this thin air. Flying barely 30 metres above the ground, we emerged in the Arezzano valley.

'All three of us were decidedly paler than we had been a few minutes earlier, but no words were wasted. In a most unsoldierly fashion I laid my hand on the shoulder of Benito Mussolini, whose rescue was now beyond doubt.

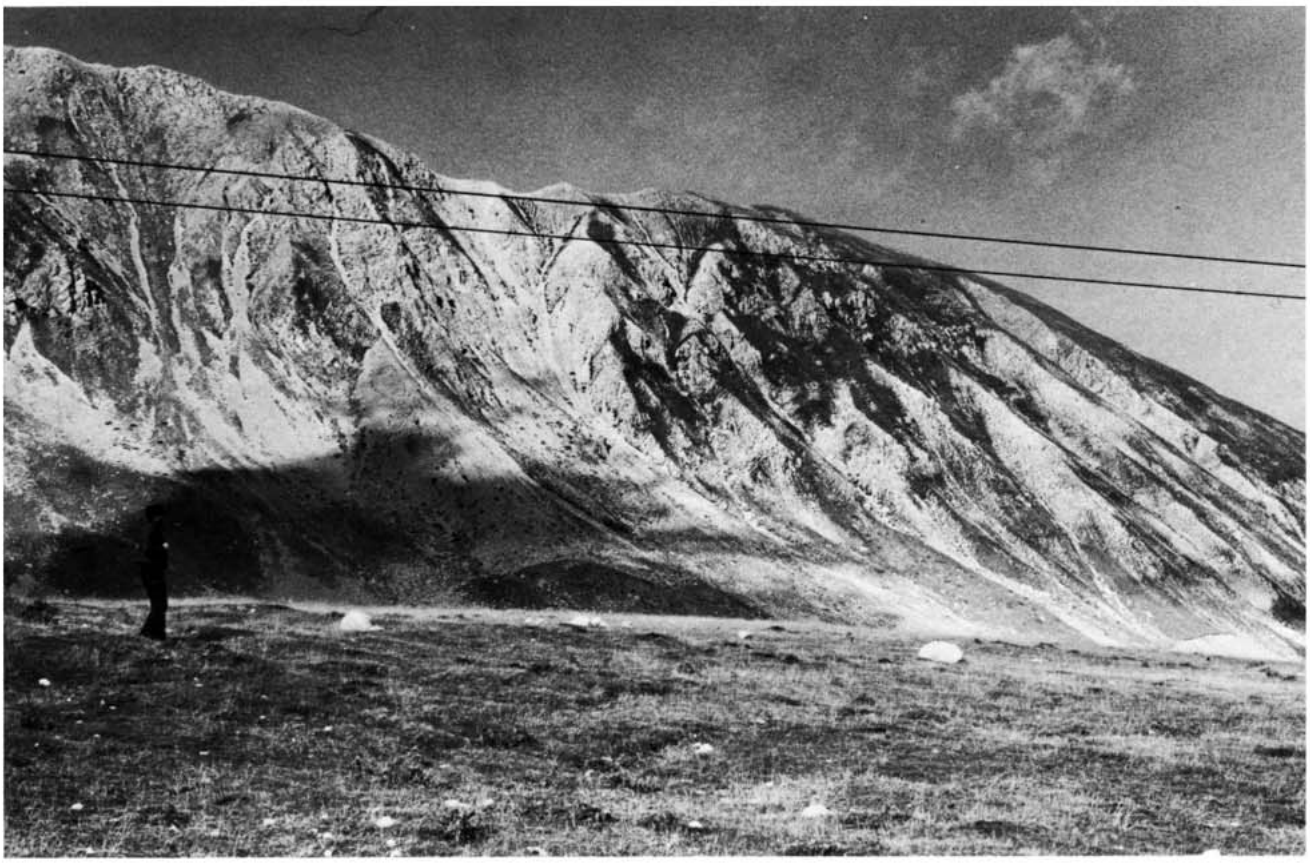
'At length Rome lay below us on our way to Practica di Mare. "Hold tight! Two-point landing," Gerlach shouted, reminding me of the damage to our landing gear. Balancing on the right front and tail wheels, we carefully touched down. Our trip was over.'

We started our tour for our 'Rescue of Mussolini' story with a visit to Pratica di Mare aerodrome, about half an hour's drive from Rome's new Leonardo da Vinci international airport, as this was where the actual rescue operation began and ended. Today Pratica di Mare is the largest military airfield (in area) in Europe mainly because many country roads and fields have been incorporated in its ever-

Above: **Mussolini has a last word with police chief Gueli before boarding the Storch (Bundesarchiv).** *Below:* **We timed our visit to the Gran Sasso so that we were on the mountain on the thirty-fourth anniversary of the rescue — September 12, 1977. The unusual climatic conditions of the area are illustrated again by the cloud which has suddenly drifted low over the valley.**

Above: **Preparing the Fieseler Storch for take-off. Skorzeny and Mussolini are aboard and Hauptmann Heinrich Gerlach, the pilot, is about to take his place. Gerlach was awarded the Ritterkreuz on September 19, 1943 on Skorzeny's recommendation — a generous gesture on his part bearing in mind that he put the successful outcome of the operation in dire jeopardy by his insistence on overloading the aircraft (Bundesarchiv).**

Below: **We spent a considerable time examining the small plateau used as the emergency runway** *(see coloured picture overleaf).* **Although this looks remarkably flat from above, it does have a pronounced downhill slope. Gerlach chose to take-off virtually directly in line with the hotel to miss the gully which partly crosses the plateau. A longer 250-yd run could have been made by taking off diagonally.**



widening perimeter. Although we had spent a year obtaining prior permission to visit the aerodrome, where we hoped to match up photographs we had of the German Fallschirmjaeger preparing for the operation, when we arrived armed with our authorisation from the Italian Ministry of Defence at the appointed time, we were told we could not photograph any military installations. Appeals to the Commanding officer proved fruitless; therefore readers are denied pictures of the derelict Dakotas, the crumbling control tower and the huge, but empty, hangars.

By leaving Rome on the Via Salaria, we were using the same exit route from the city as that of the ambulance carrying Mussolini to the Gran Sasso. However, as time was against us, we then chose to drive via the new post-war autostrada to L'Aquila rather than take the longer, slower route taken by Mussolini through Rieti.

When we reached the Gran Sasso cable car station, we found that large car park and adjacent picnic tables have now been installed and a restaurant added to the La Villetta chalet where Mussolini spent five days before being taken up to the hotel.

The editor and his Italian interpreter/guide Sergio Ardreanelli had naturally wanted to reach the hotel by cable car, the same method used by the Duce, but unfortunately the winding gear was out of action. Although the original 1943-vintage cars have now been replaced, both the old models remain lying beside the upper and lower stations.

The cable car breakdown would have meant the end of our visit were it in Mussolini's time but today there is also a road connection with the hotel. Constructed in 1968, the road winds for 27 kilometres through the foothills by a roundabout route climbing 3,000 feet although avoiding steep gradients, before ending at the hotel.

Like many Italian buildings, the hotel looks very drab from the outside, sadly in need of a coat of paint. Inside the decorations and fittings are equally ancient but this adds to the originality of the place. During the winter, the hotel provides an excellent base for snow sports and during the summer it seems equally popular as a hiker's sanctuary.

Top: **The culmination of one of the most daring exploits of the Second World War for which Otto Skorzeny, unjustifiably, received all the glory. His Ritterkreuz was awarded at the Imperial Hotel in Vienna on September 13. Another Ritterkreuz went on his recommendation to his glider pilot, Leutnant Elmar Meyer, and Generalleutnant Student became the 305th recipient of the Ritterkreuz with Oak Leaves. Major Mors, who masterminded the operation, received nothing.**

Following our usual ATB practice of staying in historic spots where possible, we booked into the hotel although unfortunately suite 201 had already been reserved. Nevertheless the Italian family due to occupy the room had not yet arrived and the manageress kindly let us photograph the rooms, very simply furnished with deal furniture. She told us that nothing had changed in the rooms although it was obvious that the bathroom had been modernised. The room where Skorzeny first saw the Duce at the window overlooks the front of the hotel.

To appreciate the skill of the operation, the whole area is best studied from the top of the large hill (or small mountain) facing the hotel (see our centre page photograph). A stiff half-hour climb brings one to the top with its magnificent views over the Abruzzi mountains extending to nearly fifty miles in good conditions. The editor climbed the mountain three times during our short stay at the hotel — regretfully the performance of his Italian compatriot is still on the secret list! (He says he was doing his PR duty).

Today an observatory is being constructed behind the hotel and the ground has also been altered by the post-war construction of the road and car park. However the small plateau beside the hotel (not lower down as described in some accounts) where the Storch took off is unspoilt. From the available photographs, we established the direction of Gerlach's take-off (see pages 12-13). A longer 250-yard distance could have been utilised by crossing the plateau diagonally, just missing the fold in the ground. Although the Storch can become airborne in favourable conditions in 50 yds, in the rarefied atmosphere of the 6,000ft plateau with two heavy passengers, Gerlach would

THE RECONSTRUCTION. This glider must have been moved into this position for the filming as it lies directly on the line of the Storch's take-off *(see photo on opposite page)* **(Bundesarchiv).**

have needed all the 200-odd yards available. Even then he used the aircraft carrier take-off technique by revving the engine while the tail was held before releasing his brakes. The 500ft drop to the valley floor would help to build up flying speed. (Landing would have been no problem as, with an 8 mph headwind, the Storch can come to rest in 18 yds!)

A marvellous view of the valley, down which the Storch flew, can be obtained from the hill but unpredictable weather conditions prevail at times. The editor watched clouds forming literally in seconds and the up-draughts of air striking the mountains can be seen to move these clouds in all directions at once!

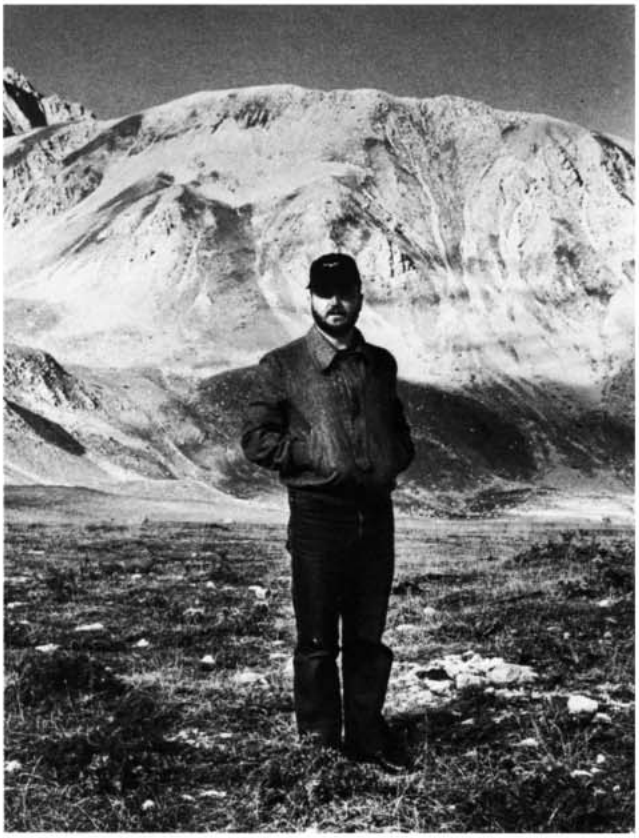
Unfortunately the upper floor of the hotel is now occupied by the Italian Air Force with a radar installation on the roof of the hotel. Although we asked permission to match the photograph of Generalleutnant Student standing on the roof after the operation, we met with the same unhelpful attitude experienced earlier at Pratica di Mare. To the editor this seemed a ridiculous security mania as the whole roof can be easily photographed from the nearby hillside!

We made contact with Otto Skorzeny in Spain in May 1974. He proved extremely helpful, captioning several of the photographs we had obtained from the Bundesarchiv in Germany. Although a UFA (German cine news) operator had arrived via the cable car to film the departure of Mussolini, we learned from Skorzeny that a Dr. Goebbles propaganda team was later sent to Italy to stage a re-enactment of the operation and several of the contemporary pictures are faked.

However, although we have used Otto Skorzeny's well-known description of the operation from his book 'Skorzeny's Special Missions' published in English by Robert Hale in 1957, Major Mors (the real officer in charge) and Generalleutnant Student have both stated that the credit given to Skorzeny for the success of the operation is completely unjustified. Hitler himself gave the accolade (and the Ritterkreuz with promotion to SS-sturmbannfuehrer) to Skorzeny and so began the legend. Student protested to Goering and Mors complained to Luftwaffe HQ but they were told that Hitler wanted all the credit to go to Skorzeny.

Above: **On September 12, Berlin radio issued the following official statement: German parachutists and men of the security service and the armed SS today carried out an operation for the liberation of Mussolini who had been imprisoned by the Badoglio Government'. The Germans later issued this photograph via neutral sources purporting to illustrate the actual assault although, as the UFA photographer did not arrive until later, this picture can only have been taken at the reconstruction (Keystone).** *Below:* **Our reconstruction exactly thirty-four years after the original landing.**

THE RECONSTRUCTION. *Above:* **The paratroopers arrive via the cable car (Bundesarchiv) out of action during our visit,** *(above right).*



Left: **A much-publicised photograph of a posed paratrooper in front of the same DFS 230 glider as on page 29 which bears the code 1-34. The photo clearly shows the revolutionary 7.92mm FG42 'assault' rifle. This weapon fires from a closed bolt for accuracy in the semi-automatic mode and from an open bolt on full auto which permits cooling of the chamber giving the full value of an LMG.** *Above:* **Our sporting Italian on the same spot in September 1977.**

Generalleutnant Kurt Student on the hotel roof during the film reconstruction. When we showed this photograph to Skorzeny (who did not approve of the making of the propaganda film, possibly because it did not include his own SS unit), his comment was that 'I was very astonished to see from your picture that even General Student was up in the mountain when this film was made.' Regrettably the Italian Air Force denied us access to the roof to match the photograph (Bundesarchiv).

Generalleutnant Student had informed Skorzeny on September 11 that the operation was in the hands of the paratroopers (i.e. not the SS whose embryo commando unit had been sent by Schellenberg for them to gain experience only). Student then put Major Mors in charge of the liberation and it was Mors and Leutnant von Berlepsch who worked out the rescue plan. That same evening, Major Mors discussed his plan with Student for his approval. While they were in conference Skorzeny arrived and asked to participate personally in the rescue attempt. Student asked Mors and he agreed to let Skorzeny travel in a glider on the understanding that, although the SS officer was of a superior rank to von Berlepsch, he would not interfere. Student actually committed this arrangement to paper to avoid any misunderstanding. Later Major Mors said he knew nothing of Skorzeny's plan to take Generale Soleti on the operation; the first he knew of it being when he saw the Italian at the hotel. Likewise Major Mors said that Skorzeny jeopardised the successful outcome of the operation by travelling in the Storch. It stands to reason that with a difficult, short take-off, a pilot lightens the aircraft as much as possible — one does not add a heavyweight like Skorzeny!

Nevertheless Skorzeny reaped the glory from the operation and the reputation it subsequently gave him led him to be named whenever a mastermind was needed to explain away an important post-war crime or mercenery operation . . . from Biafra to Egypt, including an assassination plot against Fidel Castro. More recently, Skorzeny was held up, in a book by Piers Paul Reid, to be the so-called 'Mr. Big' who masterminded the £2½ million Great Train Robbery in England in 1963!

Skorzeny suffered from cancer in later life and, even as we corresponded with him, was failing. After he died on Saturday, July 5, 1975 in Madrid, his remains were taken back to his native Austria for burial in Vienna.

Watched by Joachim von Ribbentrop, Hitler greets Mussolini at the airfield at FHQu Wolfchanze on September 15, 1943.

AFTER THE BATTLE

WRECK RECOVERY

THE MOUNTAIN RESCUE SERVICE

BY DAVID J. SMITH

Before World War II, there was no specialised Mountain Rescue Service in being because of the relatively few aircraft crashes in the hills. However, with the intensive training of aircrew for the bomber force and the enormous increase in air traffic generally, collisions with high ground became common. Many of the accidents were fatal but it was believed that some crew members would have survived if they had been found soon enough. The mountains of Snowdonia in North Wales took such a grim toll of aeroplanes that this became the birthplace of the RAF Mountain Rescue Service. The experience gained by this local unit was used to establish other special teams to cover all mountainous areas of the British Isles. This service still operates today, although aircraft accidents in the hills are now rare, and its main task is rescuing civilian climbers.

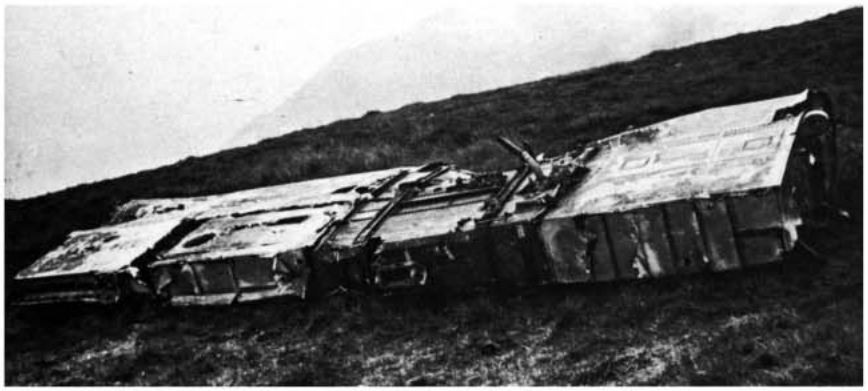
The MRS is exceptional in that it arose from a need recognised at station level, rather than as a directive from the Air Ministry. In the early stages of the war, it became apparent that the discovery of a crashed aircraft in the mountains was often a matter of chance and the subsequent removal of casualties a difficult problem. During the last five months of 1942, there were ten major crashes in the Snowdonia area from which a total of forty dead and eight injured were removed. These accidents were attended by Station Sick Quarters (SSQ) staff from RAF Llandwrog, the nearest aerodrome, with the help of police and local people. A typical crash was Boston Z2186 of No. 418 Squadron on the flat summit ridge of Carnedd Dafydd at 3,200ft, on October 17, 1942. The wreck was seen on the mountain two days later when the cloud lifted and the first person to reach it was a local doctor. The pilot was still alive, though suffering from exposure and a broken leg, having been on the mountain for two days and two nights. Sadly, the other two crew members had both succumbed.

Top: **Anson N5371 which crashed on Foel fras on August 23, 1943. The pilot saw sheep and rocks while flying in cloud at 3,000ft, pulled the stick back and pancaked safely with only one minor injury (G. McTigue).** *Above:* **All that remains at the site today — the undercarriage and pieces of framework (A. W. Evans).**

However, the accident which really emphasised the necessity for a specially-trained rescue team occurred on November 20, 1942. At 1200 hours, a Henley target tug from RAF Towyn was reported to have crashed on Silyn Mountain on the western fringes of Snowdonia. The SSQ party from Llandwrog searched in thick mist for four hours without success. At 1900 hrs a report was received that an Anson had crashed on Moel Eilio four hours previously and had been found by local people. One airman was still alive but died before he could be properly treated. The Llandwrog Medical Officer (MO) who might have saved him was otherwise engaged on the fruitless Henley search. The following day, an air search revealed the Henley wreck wedged in a gully on the cliffs of Cwm Silyn. An RAF party was sent there but found that the pilot's body was inaccessible as it was on the top of a 60ft rock face. Next day, local quarrymen recovered the body. This solved the problem but it hurt the pride of the local RAF to have their job done by civilians.

The following January, Flight Lieutenant

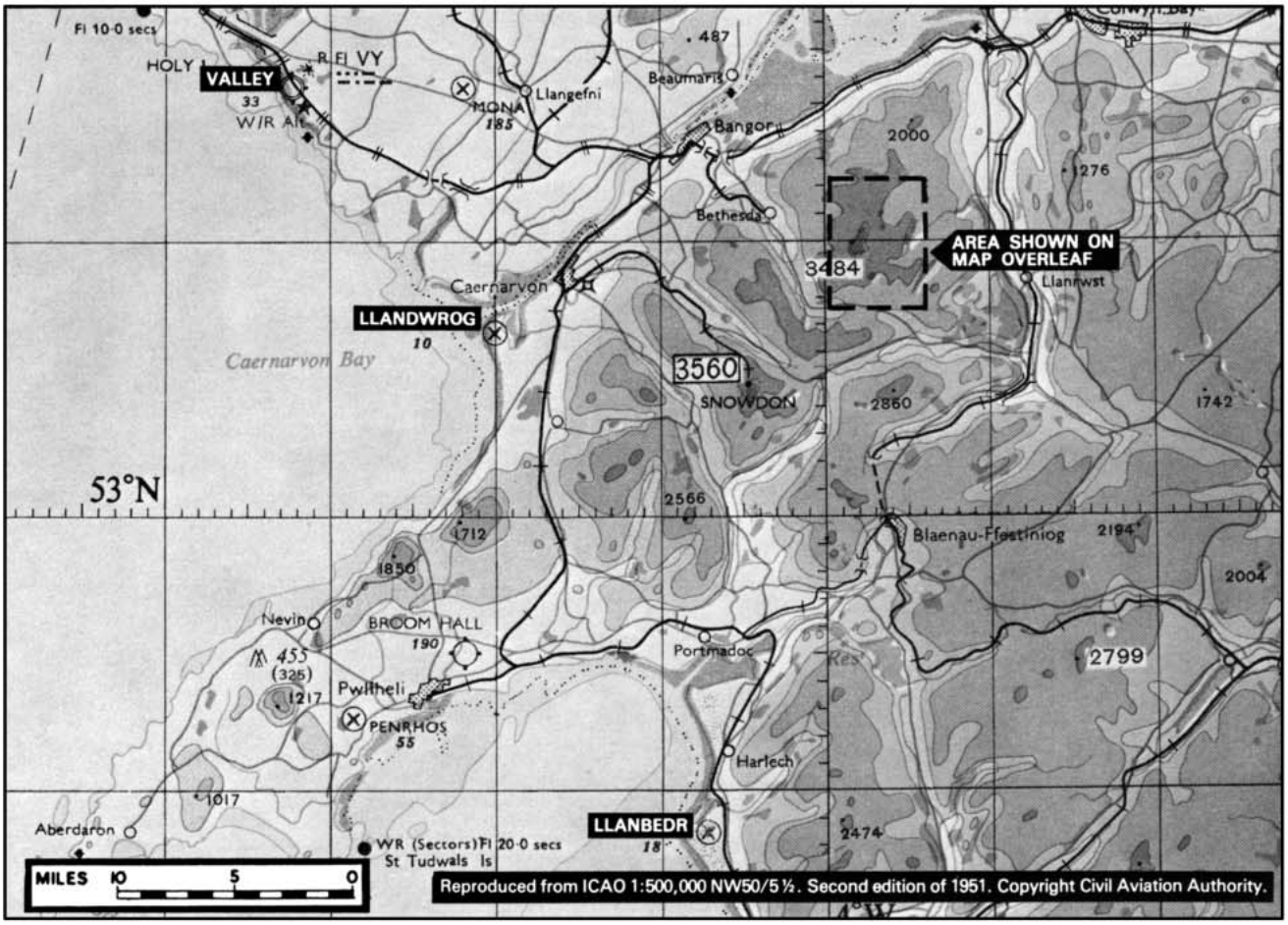
Right: **The wing of Boston Z2186 which crashed on Carnedd Dafydd on October 17, 1942 with *(below)* the tail section lying in a stream (D. J. Smith).**

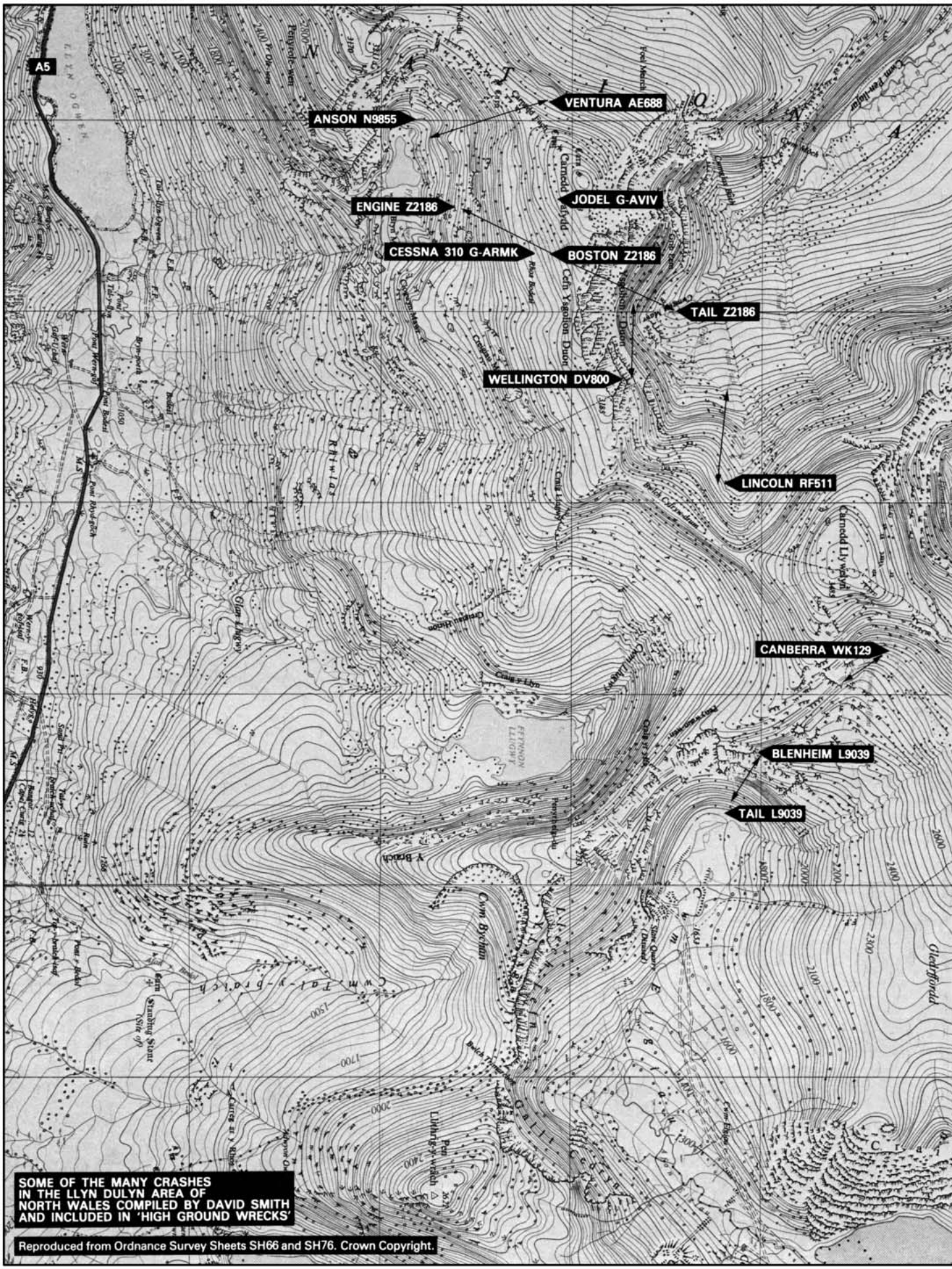


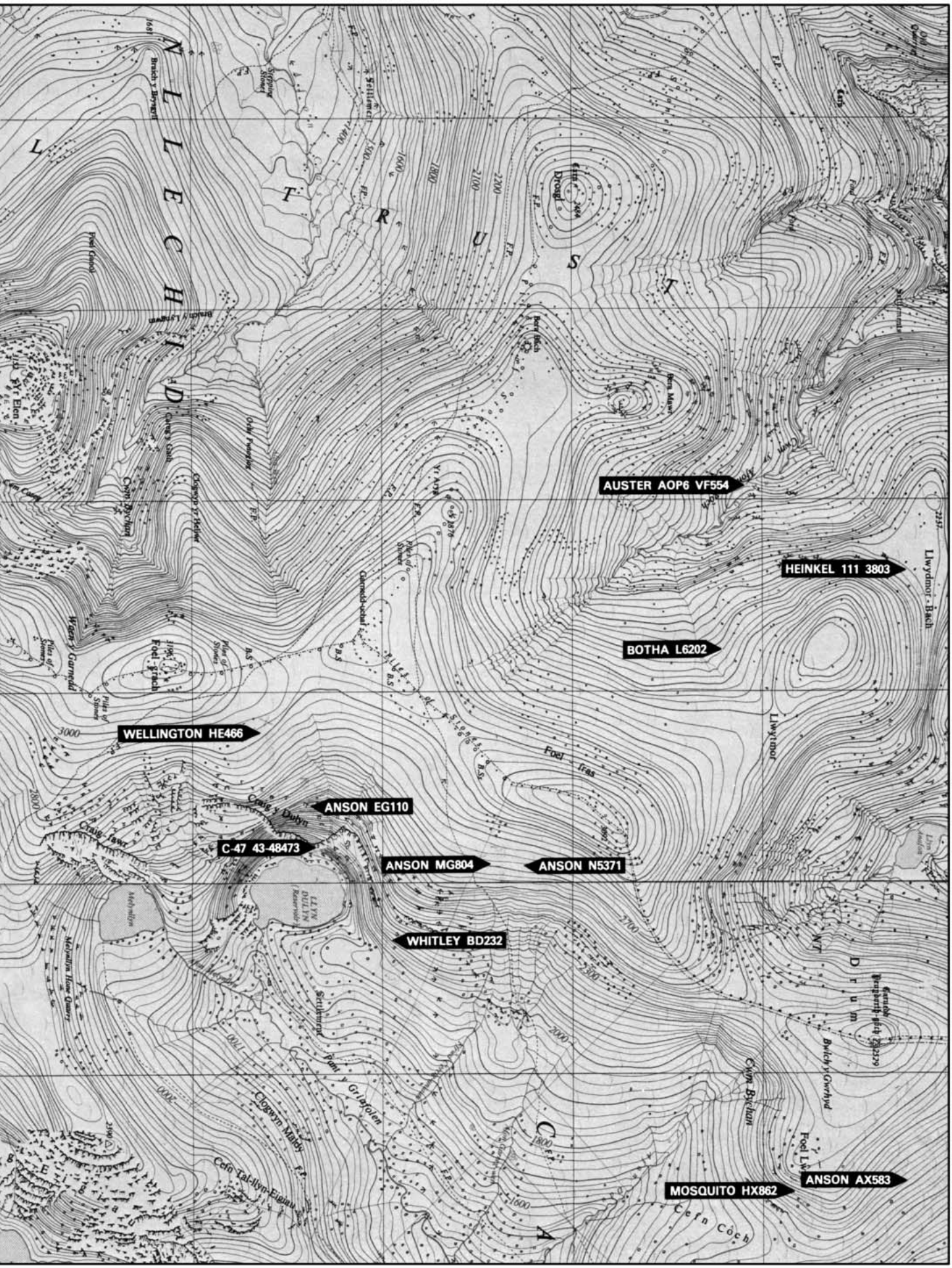
George Graham, the MO at Llandwrog, was awarded the MBE for his services to mountain rescue. However, he was not satisfied with the rescue facilities available and an accident which occured on January 14, illustrates the reason for his disquiet. An Anson, EG110, crashed in Snowdonia during a night flight. The pilot, despite concussion and lacerations of the face, struggled down to a farm. When Flight Lieutenant Graham and two nursing orderlies reached him, he was irrational and could not give any idea of the direction in which the aircraft and its other three occupants lay. Reinforced by thirty more personnel sent from base, they split into four parties and combed the mountain slopes until the early hours of the morning without result. It should be remembered that the men were inadequately equipped. Gas capes and ordinary army boots are hardly the thing for these gale-swept peaks in January, plus the fact that only the MO had any previous climbing experience.

At first light, they set off in two separate groups. The first soon found the Anson wreck with one member of the crew still alive, but, as the MO was in the second party, contact had to be made with it before the injured man could receive proper medical attention. Communications between the two parties were so bad that it was another hour-and-a-half before he reached the scene. Removal of the patient to the ambulance then required three further hours of arduous work. As well as the lack of radio, their transport was unable to negotiate the steep track up from the Conway Valley and a civilian vehicle had to lend a hand.

To remedy these faults, Graham proposed a unit specially equipped for MR and, when this




A5
VENTURA AE688
ANSON N9855
ENGINE Z2186
JODEL G-AVIV
CESSNA 310 G-ARMK
BOSTON Z2186
TAIL Z2186
WELLINGTON DV800
LINCOLN RF511
CANBERRA WK129
BLENHEIM L9039
TAIL L9039
SOME OF THE MANY CRASHES IN THE LLYN DULYN AREA OF NORTH WALES COMPILED BY DAVID SMITH AND INCLUDED IN 'HIGH GROUND WRECKS'
Reproduced from Ordnance Survey Sheets SH66 and SH76. Crown Copyright.


AUSTER AOP6 VF554
HEINKEL 111 3803
BOTHA L6202
WELLINGTON HE466
ANSON EG110
C-47 43-48473
ANSON MG804
ANSON N5371
WHITLEY BD232
MOSQUITO HX862
ANSON AX583
LLECHID
TRUST
Llwydmoor Bach
Llwynmoor
Foel Fras
Foel Grach
Carnedd-uchaf
Craig y Dulyn
Cefn Tal-llyn-Eigiau
Clogwyn Mabby
Pont y Gritiaolen
Cefn Coch
Cwm Bychan
Drum

had been accepted, he conducted his first rescue trial in February, 1943. An American Jeep and a 27 hp Humber four-wheeled drive ambulance were selected as the most suitable vehicles. Trials were also carried out with radio equipment so that search parties could communicate both with each other and also with the vehicles which would penetrate as far as possible into the mountains. Improvements on the General Service Stretcher were also proposed and this was later superseded by a lightweight version, far more suitable for mountain rescue work.

Four months later, the unit was ready for action. Ropes, maps, compasses, and wind-proof clothing were supplied and portable radios were provided for search parties. A little-known fact is that the US Army Air Force supplied a considerable amount of equipment and an article about the unit appeared in *Yank* magazine, written by a US sergeant who spent several days with them. He summed up their achievements rather well: 'There are some Americans today who crashed and baled out in this country, and they will probably remember these amiable, hardy MRS boys for a long time. The Americans were found on the slopes and hidden in the cold fog that wrapped around them in these strange mountains. They must have thought through the pain and shock that it was a hell of a way to reach England. And then, clumping up the slope, were a group of friendly Britishers, coming in out of the fog and delivering them to white sheets, sleep and recovery.'

Meanwhile, crashes in the Welsh Mountains continued to occur, but all were rapidly located, apart from a Botha which crashed on August 29. Despite air searches, it was not finally found until August 31. However, all four crew had been killed instantaneously. (This crash was in the news in 1975 when a climber found the pilot's ring inscribed with his initials.)

One of the last crashes of 1943 was an Anson from Jurby on the Isle of Man, which happened on November 30. Two of the crew walked down to the village of Bethesda but were very uncertain of the location of the wreck. The search continued without success throughout the following day but, on the morning of December 2, a third airman reached Bethesda. The fourth man was still alive in the wreck when he had left him and it was imperative that there should be no further delay in finding it. Five hours later, they found the Anson near the 3,000ft summit of Foel Grach with the fourth survivor wrapped in a parachute in the gun turret. Although suffering from a fractured foot and dehydration, he was in good spirits and was swiftly removed to the ambulance. This crash was very close to the Anson which had been the subject of the arduous search the previous January. This small area on the slopes of Foel Grach above Llyn Dulyn, the Black Lake in Welsh, achieved notoriety as a graveyard of aircraft. Six were lost here, with fourteen more within a three mile radius. Treacherous down-draughts were said to be the cause, but it is only in recent years that the phenomenon of mountain wave currents has been fully understood.

Nevertheless, the Team's activities were not without their lighter moments. On one night call-out, the jeep failed to negotiate a sharp bend in the town of Bangor and ended up embedded in the front window of a grocery store. The team lived on salvaged tins of sardines for some time after this! Another night, they were called to a crash on Snowdon. The wreck could be seen burning on the mountain, but, when they reached it, there was no trace of the crew. Several hours were wasted searching in the dark for them until it was discovered that the aircraft was a Queen Bee radio-controlled target plane! This had been lost by its base in Anglesey and they had not bothered to tell anybody!

Flight Lieutenant George Graham (second from left), the Llandwrog Medical Officer, with members of the unit (G. McTigue).

The main allies of the MRS in finding lost aircraft were the Royal Observer Corps who plotted all aircraft movements and were often able to give a rough location of where a crash might lie, and shepherds who often stumbled upon missing aeroplanes. One of the latter was a USAAF Thunderbolt which had disappeared a week beforehand. Its last position was unknown and there was no clue where to start looking. Similarly, an Oxford lay on the hills with its dead crew for over a month before a shepherd found it. Another chance discovery concerned a USAAF C-47 which failed to arrive at RAF Valley. An air search of the mountains was carried out without spotting anything but, eleven days later, an MR party on another task found the C-47 perched on the cliff above Llyn Dulyn. (This accident was described in *After the Battle No. 1)*

A particularly gruelling rescue on February 20, 1944, involved the crew of Anson LT433. The injured had been in the wreck for 21½ hours before they were found and it took three round trips with a stretcher in darkness, totalling six hours, to remove them to the ambulance. The same year, the injured New Zealand crew of yet another Anson had the clever idea of putting dinghy marker dye in a mountain stream to indicate their whereabouts in thick mist. The stream was one of several which ran into Llyn Dulyn and the searchers followed the appropriate one to the wreck.

Mercifully, the final months of the war brought a drop in the number of accidents. One of the last occurred in February 1945 when a USAAF Marauder, on the final stage of a ferry flight from Florida, crashed on the 3,100ft. summit of Y Garn. It was the MRT's melancholy duty to recover the bodies of the crew from the snow-covered mountain. The Team's final call-out was on May 17, 1945 to a Mustang of the 4th Fighter Group which had dived into a forest near Bala.

On June 7, 1945, Llandwrog was disbanded and the Team's new base became Llanbedr, further down the North Wales coast. Some years after the war, another move was made to Valley, Anglesey, where the Team is based today.

The MRTs job was mostly the sad one of carrying bodies down the mountains for a decent burial but, now and again, they saved a life and this is what made it all worthwhile. The dangers they faced were real, especially in the early days when they had no proper training in mountain craft. If the weather turns, the Welsh Mountains can be savage at any time of the year and many of the search

The Humber ambulance with attached tent for resuscitating survivors (G. McTigue).

The tail of Beaufighter RD210 which crashed at Aran Fawddwy on February 10, 1945.

operations had to be carried out at night amongst the precipitous crags.

Today, if you walk amongst the gullies and rocks of the area, you will find fragments of aircraft scattered everywhere on some of the more notorious mountains. Trails of debris lead down the rocks from a burned patch where some warplane smashed itself and crew into oblivion. Sometimes crashes happened so close together that you will find, say, a Ventura wingtip and an Anson undercarriage, side-by-side. Here and there, the faded red and blue of an RAF roundel shows against the greyness of the rocks — pathetic remains that are the only memorial to a band of gallant airmen.

David Smith would like to thank two former members of the Llandwrog MRT for their help in preparing this article. They are Gregory McTigue who was with the Team throughout its wartime existence and who received the BEM for his efforts, and John C. Barrows who joined it early in 1944.

Mr. Smith has recently published the second, enlarged edition of 'High Ground Wrecks' which is a comprehensive, illustrated guide to the location of over 600 crashed aircraft sites in the United Kingdom. The list includes examples of almost every operational wartime aircraft as well as several post-war military and civil crash sites. The listing is broken down into areas covering northern, central and southern Scotland, the Scottish islands, the Border hills, western Pennines, the Lake District, the Yorkshire Moors, Peak District, north Wales, mid and south Wales, Dartmoor and south-west England, Northern Ireland and Eire.

Interest in aviation wreckology has become widespread during the past five years and, although Mr. Smith appreciates he will probably be criticised by some enthusiasts for revealing all this information (which includes Ordnance Survey grid references), he sees no reason to withhold it. However his personal view is that the wreckage should be left undisturbed except for the recovery of items which are to be put on public display. Considerable pillaging has already taken place and, he feels, that the taking of pieces just to moulder in garden sheds and garages, most likely to be eventually discarded, is totally pointless. Mr. Smith therefore appeals to wreck enthusiasts that anything removed should be with the intention of preserving it as these fragments on hillsides should be looked upon as a form of memorial to the airmen who so often died in these accidents.

'High Ground Wrecks' can be obtained direct from David J. Smith, 64 Woodkind Hey, Bebington, Wirral, Merseyside L63 9LR price £1.50 post paid.

The wreckage of Whitley BD232 which crashed on September 26, 1962. The tail-fin lies in the foreground with Llyn Dulyn lake in its hollow in the background (J. I. Cross).

GUNS OF THE GREAT

Of all the Second World War commanders, George S. Patton is undoubtedly the one most remembered for his personal display of firearms. His ivory-handled revolvers became the trade mark of his flamboyant leadership and gave him an image instantly recognisable to the troops.

The pistols usually photographed being worn by him were not a matched pair. One was a .45 Long Colt Single Action 1873 Army Model and the other a .357 Magnum Smith & Wesson revolver, both now displayed in the Patton Museum at Fort Knox, Kentucky.

Patton had, of course, been issued with the standard 1911 .45 Government Model semi-automatic pistol. We are told that he ground the hammer notch down so fine that it reputedly went off when he stamped his foot, grazing his thigh. This story, although recounted by several sources, is rather difficult to believe of an expert 'pistolero' who had already competed in the Olympic Games in 1912. The Colt .45 Auto is a difficult weapon to render unsafe and also the grip safety would have to be taped down and safety catch left off.

Be as it may, the fact remains that Patton was known to prefer revolvers and he purchased a new Colt Single Action from Shelton Payne Arms Company in El Paso, Texas in 1916. The .45 Colt was still accepted as a substitute personal side-arm and, carried in the traditional Western manner of a 'five-shooter', it hung on his right hip when he went to Mexico in 1916 as aide to General Pershing after the Pancho Villa brigade had attacked the border town of Columbus.

Travelling widely in northern Mexico, (in

Top: **Appropriately photographed against a 'Tanker Jacket' complete with three stars and Seventh Army Patch, this is the custom-made leather belt on which General Patton carried his ivory-handled .45 Colt and .357 S & W Magnum. 'Tio' Sam Myers of El Paso made the belt using the buckle and brass keepers from Patton's 1910 Officers Web Pistol Belt. The holsters are the 'Border Patrol' butt-forward, metal-reinforced design patented by Myers in 1938.** *Above:* **The .357 Magnum was purchased by Patton in 1935 soon after Smith & Wesson put the Model 27 on sale (Photos Maria Albertson).**

Above: **The Colt Single Action revolver purchased in 1916 for use during the US-Mexican Punitive Expedition chasing Pancho Villa. Note the two notches carved by Patton. Although originally displayed in the Patton Collection at West Point, his pistols are now at the Patton Museum, Fort Knox, Kentucky (Maria Albertson).**

1916 Model Dodge touring cars), Patton personally led an attack on the rancho San Miguelito later that year. In the gunfight that followed, 'General' Julio Cardenas and two bodyguards were killed and, as a result, Patton carved two notches on the left-hand ivory grip of his Colt.

The .357 Magnum Smith & Wesson had been sent to Patton on October 18, 1935 while he was serving on Hawaii as an intelligence officer. This was worn with the Colt in matched holsters made by S. D. Myers, the Smith & Wesson having initialled ivory grips to match the general appearance of the Colt. The belt also held a Myers handcuff case, containing a compass, and a Myers slide-on cartridge carrier to hold twelve .45 cartridges. When the belt and pistols were donated by the Patton family to the West Point Museum in 1952, the slide contained nine rounds — as it still does today.

General Patton also entered World War II with a .38 Colt Detective Special with the old 'long' grip, purchased before the butt shape was changed in 1934, but he is usually only seen wearing this pistol in behind-the-line staff offices. A small automatic, a .32 Colt, was also carried concealed under his blouse in a 'fast draw' waistband holster.

In 1944 there was a general issue of the .380 Colt Government hammerless model with the General Officers Pistol Belt designed and made by the Swank Leather Company to a specification laid down by General George Marshall. It became as much an insignia of rank as actual General's stars. Patton wore his pistol with ebony grips inlaid with ivory stars and it is the gun most seen in photographs taken of him (with both three and four star grips), prior to his death in 1945.

Patton's opposite number, as far as British troops were concerned, was undoubtedly Field-Marshal Montgomery. The clashes in their personalities are well known and recorded and although both men were highly regarded by their own troops, there, as far as guns are concerned, the comparison ends.

Left: **Although Patton wears four stars (the last awarded as a result of the Third Army's drive across France and into Germany) his .380 Colt still has its three-star grip (US Army).**

Above: **The characteristic General Officers Pistol Belt made by the Swank Leather Company with the rarely-seen .38 Colt Detective Special. This 2-inch Colt was based on the Police Positive frame.**

Montgomery is never photographed wearing the official British officer's weapon of the time, the .38 Webley and Scott. When we questioned the Field-Marshal's son, Viscount Montgomery of Alamein, as to whether any firearms belonging to his father still existed, he replied that 'as far as personal weapons are concerned, when my father died we opened the safe here (at Isington Mill) and the first thing that confronted me was a revolver. I handed it immediately to the local constabulary for safe keeping and, subsequently, requested that it should be transferred to the Imperial War Museum who now have possession of the weapon. I do not know the history of this revolver or for how long it had been in my father's possession.'

The .380 Colt semi-automatic pistol found in Field-Marshal Montgomery's safe.

We contacted the Firearms Department of the Imperial War Museum and discovered that the 'revolver' was in fact a .380 Colt automatic No. 22766 supplied by Wilkinson of Pall Mall. Although this model was an official American issue from 1944, and it could well have been presented to Monty during the war, the gunsmith's inscription makes its history a mystery.

Nevertheless, the Field-Marshal always had a weapon handy in his Humber staff car. Surprisingly, with his intensly patriotic nature, he chose the American .30 M1 Carbine, certainly a handy weapon, well favoured by officers as a two-handed pistol. This was carried clipped to a bracket in front of the folded-down hood of his car. At some period in its career, the car was fitted with an additional pair of brackets on a bar behind the front seats. It is in this condition (minus the actual weapons), that the vehicle is displayed at the National Motor Museum at Beaulieu, Hampshire.

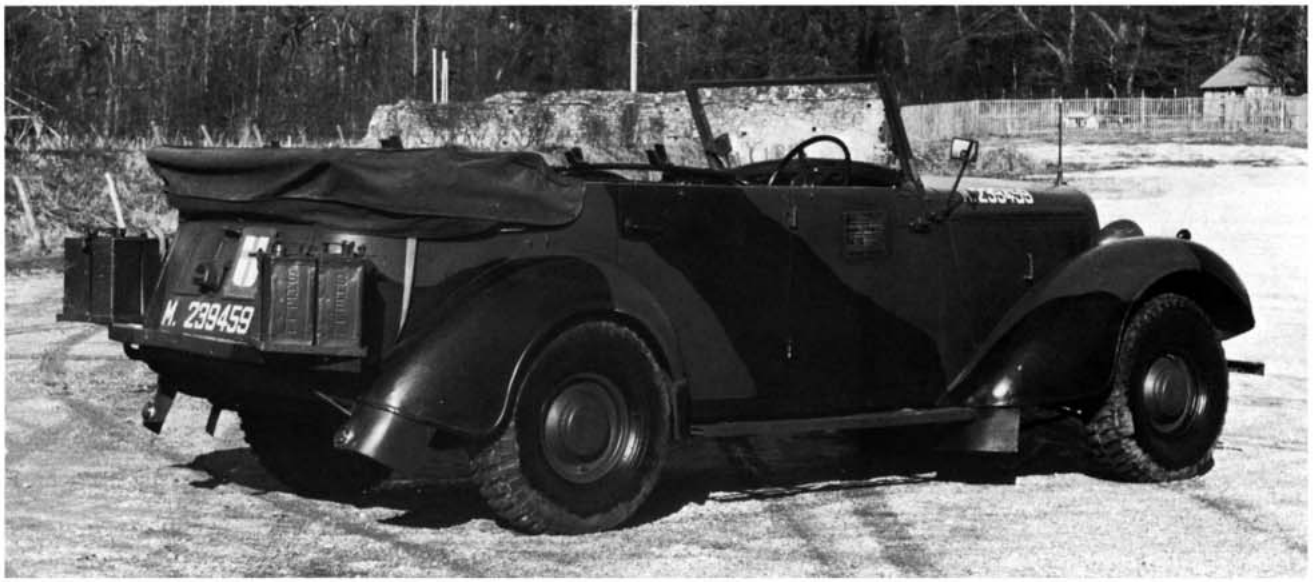
Winston Churchill had already given King George VI a similar carbine for his personal use. In 1940, Churchill records, 'His Majesty had a shooting range made in Buckingham Palace garden at which he and other members of his family and his equerries practised assidiously with pistols and tommy-guns'.

It took us quite a time to obtain an admission from the Palace that a range had, in fact, been constructed in the grounds. It had been situated on the right-hand side of the lawn in front of the Palace (we see the rear of the building from the Mall) where there was already a bank of earth. No trace remains today but its position is indicated on the aerial photograph.

The King's .30 M1 Carbine, No. 2387, manufactured by the Inland Division, was given on permanent loan to the Imperial War Museum, London after the war together with his personal Sten gun. This weapon, a Mk 11 No. E2D, was handed over complete in a

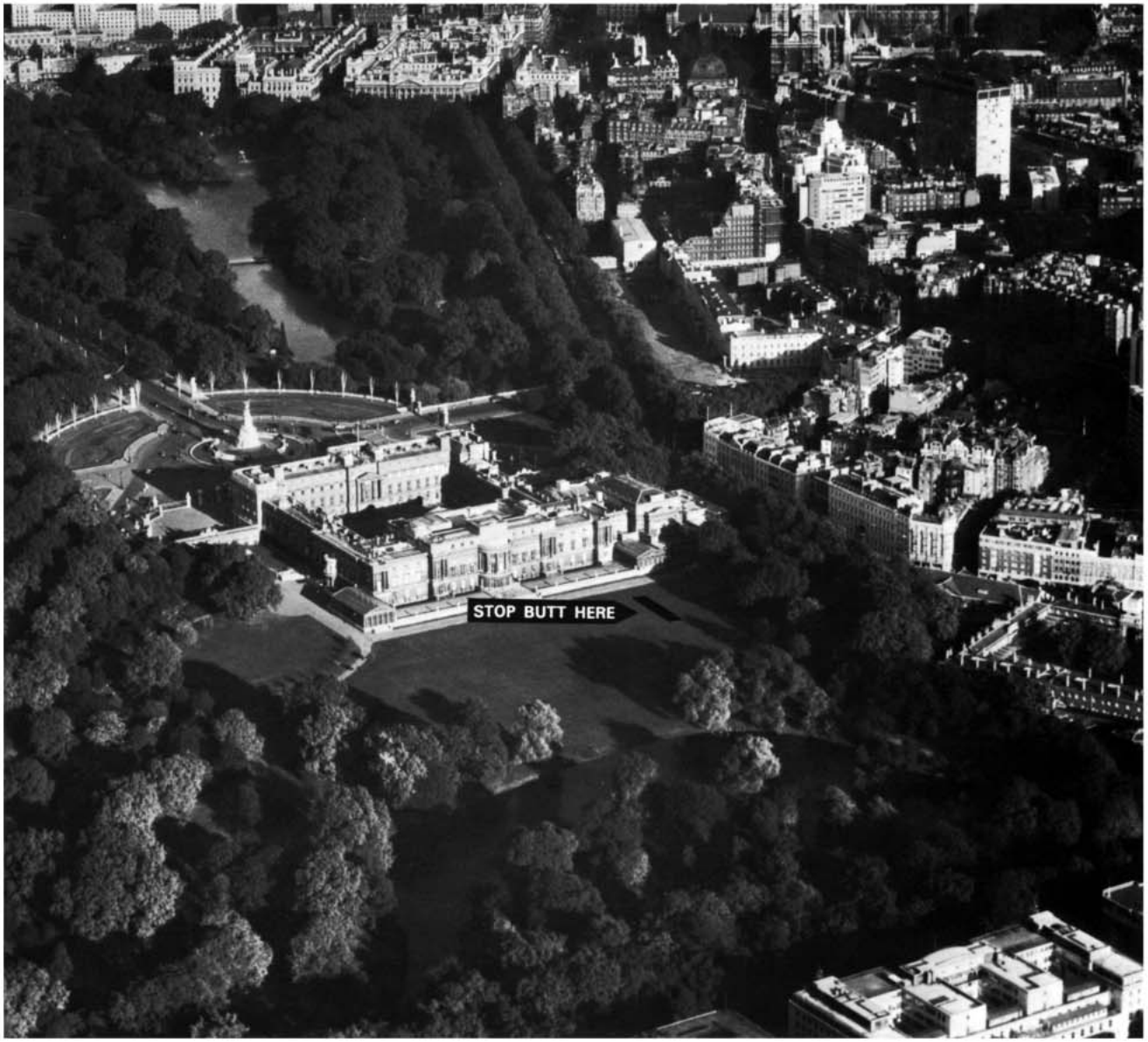
Monty 'defenceless' against Patton's big guns. A friendly photo taken in France on August 20, 1944 (IWM).

Centre: **General Eisenhower presents the Field-Marshal with a .30 M1 Carbine during an inspection tour of the US 2nd and 3rd Armoured Divisions on February 24-25, 1944 (Keystone).** *Right:* **Although conclusive proof does not exist, most probably this is the same weapon clipped in the back of Monty's Humber photographed at Couvre Chef near Caen on July 11, 1944 (IWM).**



Above: **Field-Marshal Montgomery's Humber staff car now at the National Motor Museum, Beaulieu minus the M1 Carbine. Note that an additional set of Lee-Enfield rifle brackets have been added to the parade hand-rail behind the front seats (National Motor Museum).**

Below: **Buckingham Palace with the position of the wartime range indicated. We were told that its location was determined by an already-existing bank of earth which provided the stop butt. (Footnote. Regulations for modern outdoor full-bore ranges would require a danger area behind the butts of three miles!)**



King George VI's .30 M1 Carbine displayed by John Turner of the Imperial War Museum's Firearms Department.

The 9mm MkII Sten disassembled in the fitted case believed to have been personally constructed by His Majesty.

fitted wooden case (reputed to have been constructed by the King, who was a keen carpenter) containing three spare magazines with separate provision for ammunition storage. Unfortunately neither weapon is currently on display to the public.

Winston Churchill himself was never far away from firearms during the war years, although he had lost his old German Mauser semi-automatic pistol in the Boer War in South Africa.

The Mauser, No. 13769 had been sold to a Mr. Balfour on December 30, 1898 with instructions to engrave it W. L. S. Churchill. The pistol travelled with the young Winston to Ondurman where Churchill came very close to death. The Dervishes fought fanatically and he only escaped being hacked to death by shooting his enemies at close range with his Mauser.

In 1899, Winston Churchill was determined to see and report on another war against the Boers in South Africa and he sailed on the *Donottar Castle* in October as a correspondent. He secured a place on an armoured train leaving Estcourt but at Chieveley, fourteen miles to the north, the train was ambushed and Churchill captured.

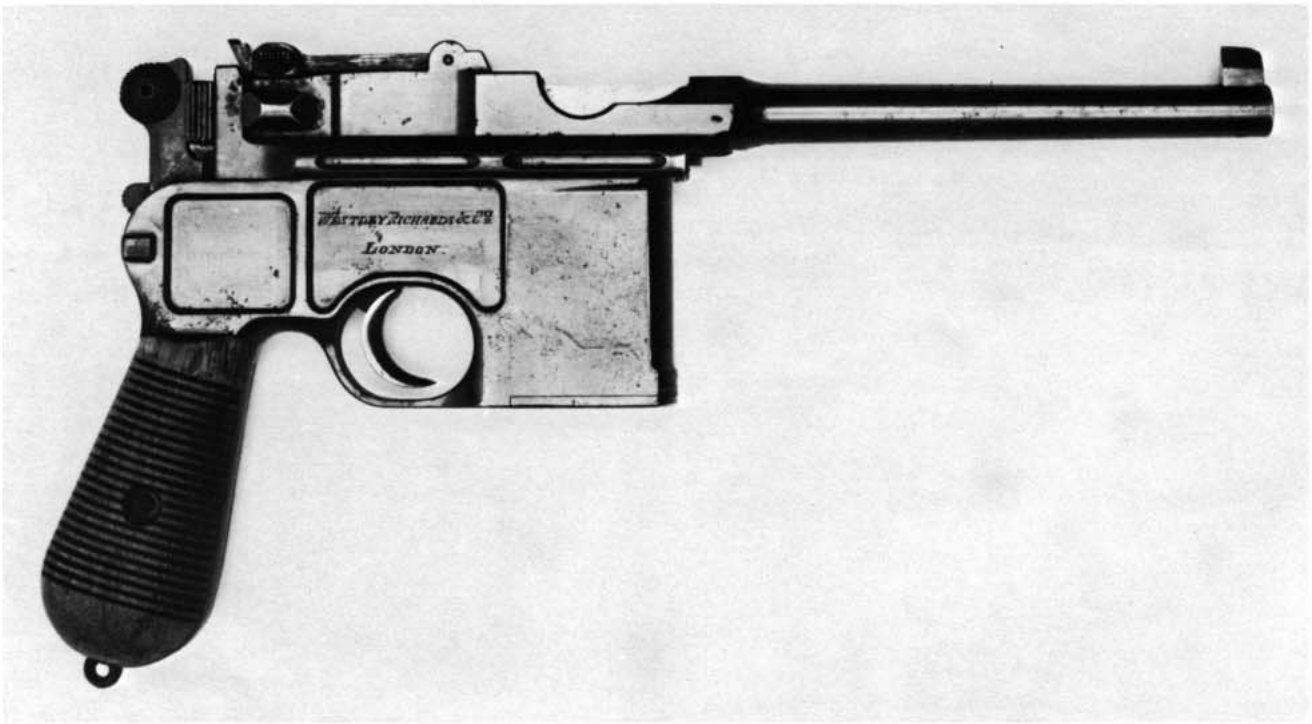
After Churchill was taken prisoner, the Mauser was found by an NCO of the Royal Irish Fusiliers in a Boer Laager. Finding its way back to England, it was taken from one, Matthew Dodds of 36 Marilenne Street, Stockton-on-Tees, on Monday, December 23, 1907 at 9.30 p.m. by Deputy-Sergeant T. Phizacklea as Dodds was threatening to shoot his wife and daughter with it! Dodds refused to name the NCO but agreed to sign a letter the following day on the history of the 'revolver'.

On March 22, 1971 the Mauser was auctioned at Sotheby's of London when Carl Foreman, producer of the film 'Young Winston', purchased it for £4,100. It seems, however, that some doubt exists in some circles as to its authenticity . . . long before police in Caracas, Venezuela, apprehended a 12-year-old boy in January 1978 who had in his possession an 1898-model Mauser automatic pistol engraved with 'Winston Spencer Churchill' . . . !

During the Second War, the Prime Minister, was provided with a personal bodyguard — Detective-Inspector W. H. Thompson. Thompson had already served as Churchill's bodyguard from 1921-32 carrying the .32 Webley and Scott MP semi-automatic pistol which was official issue to the pre-war Special Branch. Bill Thompson told us in 1977 (then aged 87) that Churchill asked him to take over his own pistols — a .45 Colt and a .38 Webley and Scott — both semi-automatic pistols. Thompson wrote to us that he carried these everywhere he went and that Churchill regularly practised with both weapons.

'In August 1939' continued Thompson in his letter to the editor, 'I received a telegram from Mr. Churchill asking me to meet him at Croydon aerodrome. I did so and was requested by him to follow on to Chartwell. Here he informed me that from information he had received in France the Germans intended to take his life. "Go and get your gun Thompson and guard me at night I will look after myself in the day time." After informing him that I did not have a gun he sent me to his secretary for her to give me his Colt for the time being. She was far from obliging and wanted to know for certain my authority.

The 7.63mm-calibre Mauser. No. 13769 now owned by film producer Carl Foreman. The front part of the frame is engraved 'W. L. S. Churchill' (Sotheby's).



However, after she was satisfied, she handed me the Colt which I returned two weeks later when I was officially re-called to Special Branch and issued with a .32 Webley and Scott and two magazines. I was then given another officer to help with Mr. Churchill's protection and he also was supplied with a .32 Webley and Scott.

'Owing to the dangers which surrounded No. 10 Downing Street we eventually took over part of the building at the end of Whitehall which we called "The Annexe" and arrangements were made here for me to sleep in a small room the main part of the room being for the Marine Guard.

'Each day my colleague and I checked our guns as well as Winston's. For the first twelve months of the war Winston did not practise at all but, as soon as he became Prime Minister and went to Chequers, he frequently went to a quiet part of the grounds where he used both his pistols and practised at length. One day later, when the Sten gun became well-known, he asked me to acquire one and bring it with me for practise. However he did not appear at all happy using the Sten gun and did not use it again until October 26, 1941. On that occasion General Alan Brooke with several others were guests at Chequers and went with Winston to see a demonstration of the Bombard mortar, after which Winston, who had asked for the Sten gun to be brought with us, decided to have some practise with it and also with his two automatics. Again the Sten gun did not appear to please him and whilst practising with his two automatics he put one down on an improvised seat at his side. The pistol was already loaded and one of the secretaries picked the gun up to hear Winston speak very loudly and in an angry voice: "Put that gun down at once and never touch my guns again! Thompson and I are the only ones to touch them." He appeared to be very angry and suggested that his guests returned to Chequers. We then proceeded to a quiet spot in the grounds at Chequers where he continued his practise. But he never used the Sten gun again. Brooke, seeing me bring the Sten gun from the back seat of the car was, I believe, under the impression that we always carried it with us. However that was the only occasion for to carry his Colt, my pistol and also a Sten gun would have been a considerable embarrassment in public places in civilian clothes.

'The trips abroad during the war caused me

Churchill fires the Sten — Detective-Inspector Thompson watches the target.

Above: **We went to endless trouble in trying to establish the location of these famous photographs of the Prime Minister taken on July 31, 1940 as the caption only refers to 'the north-eastern coast'. The only identifying features are the two buildings at the bottom of the photographs. We finally discovered they had been taken on Hornsea sea-front in Yorkshire. After all this effort, we decided to take along our own stand-in for Winston Churchill, complete with Thompson, to reconstruct the photo** *(below).*

Generals Eisenhower and Bradley shoot it out with Winston Churchill using a variety of weapons during an inspection visit to the US 2nd Armoured Division in March 1944 (IWM). *Above:* Using the .30 M1 Carbine. *Below:* What a mouth-watering table of goodies — just take your pick and blast away!

quite an amount of trouble carrying Winston's Colt as well as my own pistol. In the United States, where I came into contact with my opposite numbers guarding the President, they expressed surprise at the small calibre pistol I carried and occasionally expressed disdain at such a small weapon being used.

'One Friday in 1943 I was instructed by one of the secretaries that Mr. Churchill, who was due to leave for Chequers, would be delayed; this gave us an opportunity to take tea before leaving. As at that time I had the use of the Prime Minister's garage I went there for that purpose. Shortly afterwards the telephone rang — a direct line to the Annexe — and I was told that the Prime Minister was waiting to start for Chequers. In leaning across a settee to answer the telephone my pistol slipped out of its holster passing down inside the left leg of my trousers. I followed the gun down with my hand, knowing that the safety catch was on and that the pistol should not fire. However the hammer hit the ground first and fired, the bullet passing upwards hitting my left calf and, as I was in a crouching position, the bullet crossed to my right knee and eventually finished up hitting my hip and in passing did not damage the artery. Winston was very concerned about this and daily telephoned the hospital until I showed improvement.

'When the time came for me to be released from hospital and report to Mr. Churchill, I wondered what his reaction would be and asked him, "Sir, have you still got confidence in me to continue to take care of your guns?" "Yes", he replied, "you have always been most careful but I would like to see the pistol that you were carrying at the time". I had brought it with me having been told that he wished to see it. After he examined it he said it was faulty "You must obtain a different type of pistol". Many pistols had been handed in to Scotland Yard when war broke out and had been placed in storage. I examined several and decided on a Luger which I carried with me until the end of the war. I obtained special permission from Special Branch to use the Luger which was not officially used but permission was granted to me after Winston had examined it and Robert Churchill (the gunsmith who bore a striking resemblance to the Prime Minister) had checked it thoroughly.

'On no occasion abroad during the war did Winston practise until on meeting a number of United States generals who were firing with an American Carbine which at that time was being spoken of very highly and he was asked to try his skill. As usual his marksmanship was outstanding and he was congratulated by

Firing the .45 1928 A1 Model Thompson. The early-type box magazine holds 20 rounds. Over 1,750,000 Thompsons of different types were manufactured during WWII, the cost dropping from $209 in 1939 to $45 in 1944.

Detective-Sergeant Richards (facing the camera), carrying the 7.65mm Menta semi-automatic pistol, is pictured acting as bodyguard to Winston Churchill outside Claridges Hotel in September 1945. The Menta is an obscure German pistol manufactured by Becker & Hollander at Suhl and is also sometimes referred to as a Beholla, Leonhardt or Stenda. Its claim to fame is that one needs a bench vice, hammer and thin drift to dismantle the weapon!

the Generals around him.' *(This was the occasion in March 1944 when Churchill paid an inspection visit to the US 2nd Armoured Division on Salisbury Plain where he tested his skills with a Thompson, Garand rifle and M1 Carbine against Generals Bradley and Eisenhower see photograph Ed.)*

'Nevertheless the years were passing,' continues Thompson, 'and we were spending little time at Chequers so Winston had little opportunity for practising with his Colt. However, in the early part of 1945, we went to Chequers and, to my surprise, Winston asked me to fix up a target about 25 yards away and quite close to the house. We all practised for a while then, having replaced the target with a new one, he fired his Colt. Except for one bullet, all the others were around the centre of the target. This was the last time that we practised together for, at the conclusion of the war, being a reserve officer, I resigned.

'I handed Mr. Churchill his two automatic pistols, He thanked me for the manner in which I had taken care of them and they were then handed to a secretary, placed in a box and put away. I returned to Special Branch, handed in my resignation and also the Luger and two magazines of bullets.'

When we wrote to the Special Branch concerning the present whereabouts of Thompson's Luger they replied that all records relating to the period in question no longer existed. The reason for our request to them for confirmation is that Thompson's story is, in respect of the type of pistol he carried, in direct conflict with the account given us by ex-Detective-Sergeant Roy Astley Richards. Mr. Richards records that the Model 1911 Webley and Scott semi-automatic was 'highly unsuitable for protection duty because, when cocked, the external hammer frequently caught on some part of the clothing. For this reason I loaned my own pistol (a 7.65mm Menta hammerless semi-automatic pistol No. 8787 made by Becker & Hollander held on Thames Valley Firearms Certificate No. 8000) to the officer appointed as Winston Churchill's bodyguard, ex-Detective-Inspector W. H. Thompson, until the end of the war. The pistol was carried by Mr. Thompson and used by him to protect the Prime Minister'. When Thompson retired, according to Mr. Richards, the weapon was handed back with the comment: 'It went everywhere with me'.

Tom Collins shows the editor the Menta at his shop at No. 171 New Kent Road, London.

In November 1945, the Menta was carried by Detective-Sergeant Richards (who served as Churchill's new bodyguard from June 1945 to April 1946) to protect him in Paris and Brussels where he received the freedom of those cities. In 1969 Astley Richards retired from the Metropolitan Police and, in spite of his thirty-eight years official service was himself, subject to a directive from the Chief Constable of the Thames Valley Constabulary to relinquish ownership of the weapon. In a letter to Mr. Richards in January 1970, the Chief Constable relented in so far as he was willing to agree to continued ownership subject to a steel rod being sweated into the barrel. Not wanting to be a partner to the virtual destruction of such an historic weapon, Mr. Richards returned the pistol to the Southern Armoury in New Kent Road, London, which had originally supplied him the weapon early in 1941. It was there that veteran gunsmith Tom Collins showed us the pistol now in his personal collection.

However, from what we are told of Winston Churchill's own prowess with arms, he had little need of a bodyguard. One of the most well-known photographs of Churchill was taken on July 31, 1940 at Hornsea, on the north-east coast of England, while the Prime Minister was inspecting anti-invasion defences. A Thompson sub-machine gun, complete with Cutts compensator, was offered to Churchill for inspection the whole sequence being photographed by Captain Horton. The famous picture is usually shown with the accompanying party masked out and it was used by the Germans in this form on propaganda leaflets dropped over England.

On the way inland from the beach, Churchill stopped to inspect the Home Guard in Seaton, a mile or so from the coast, and without his tommy gun he was defenceless when a small boy, Dennis Vickerton, held him at gunpoint!

General Alan Brooke, Chief of the Imperial General Staff, also remembered a visit to Chequers in March 1941: 'The P.M., suffering from bronchitis, came down to dinner in his 'siren suit', a one-piece garment like a child's romper-suit, of light blue. He was in

great form and after dinner sent for his rifle to give me a demonstration of the 'long port' which he wanted to substitute for the 'slope'. He followed this up with some bayonet exercises. It was one of the first occasions on which I had seen Winston in one of his real light-hearted moods. I was convulsed watching him give this exhibition of bayonet exercises with his rifle, dressed in his siren-suit and standing in the ancestral hall of Chequers. I remember wondering what Hitler would have thought of this demonstration of skill at arms.'

At Sir Winston's death in February 1965, quite an armoury existed at Chartwell, his country home at Westerham, Kent. There the weapons remained until 1974 when the ownership of all firearms in private collections in the UK, especially semi-automatic and full auto weapons (the latter classed as prohibited weapons under Section 5 of the Firearms Act 1968), was tightened up. The result was that the local police expressed concern for the security of the collection and instructed that the weapons should be deposited with an authorised gunsmith. Accordingly, on the instructions of Winston Churchill the grandson, the weapons were transferred to the care of Cogswell and Harrison Ltd of Piccadilly pending a decision on their ultimate disposal. With no possibility of retaining the collection at Chartwell, ten weapons were put up for auction at Sotheby's on July 15, 1975. The firearms were as follows:

Lot 40 A 9mm. Sten Mk. III Sub Machine Gun, serial no. L.B.-A56843, with fixed barrel, blackened finish, detachable butt, 29¾ in., with magazine.
Sold for £100

Lot 41 Another Sten Mk. III Sub Machine Gun, serial no. L.B.-A42485, 29¾ in.
Sold for £100.

Lot 42 A 9mm. Patchett Sub Machine Gun, serial no. 8930, with parkerized finish overall with chequered plastic pistol grip and hinged folding butt, 19in., with stock folded, 28⅛ in. overall, with bayonet in scabbard and two magaines.
Sold for £100.

Lot 43 A 9mm. presentation Lanchester Sub Machine Gun, serial no. P.G.8., with commercial finish, the magazine receiver inscribed 'Sterling, Lanchester Sub Machine Gun', the bolt housing inscribed 'To The Rt. Hon. Winston Churchill, P.C., C.H., M.P. "We shall fight on the beaches, on the landing ground . . . in the fields . . . in the streets . . . in the hills . . . we shall never surrender" House of Commons, 4th June 1940'; half-length walnut stock with finger grip, iron trigger guard and detachable fifty round box magazine 33½ in.
Sold for £520.

Lot 44 A Mahogany Case, the lid with brass plate inscribed Sten, fitted inside with compartments containing screw driver, four magazines, two magazine chargers and a detachable Sten butt, 27¾ in x 11 in.
Sold for £140.

Lot 45 A .30 U.S. M1 Carbine with plain 18-inch barrel and receiver, straight bolt handle, three-quarter length stock, the butt cut for a sling, iron barrel band with sling swivel, chequered heel plate and original magazine, 35⅝ in., in canvas bag
Sold for £280.

Lot 46 A 7.65 Webley and Scott Semi-Automatic Pistol, serial no. 130104, polished hammer, the left side of the frame stamped 'Webley & Scott Ltd, London & Birmingham, 7.65 M/M & .32 Automatic Pistol', chequered hard rubber grips, 6in., about 85% blued finish, both grips chipped, magazine lacking
Not sold at auction — disposed of later in private sale.

Above: **Quick on the draw! A small boy (Dennis Vickerton, now living at Sigglesthorne), gets the drop on the Prime Minister in the main street of Seaton village, Yorkshire (IWM).**
Below: **Local children help to colour the scene in 1977.**

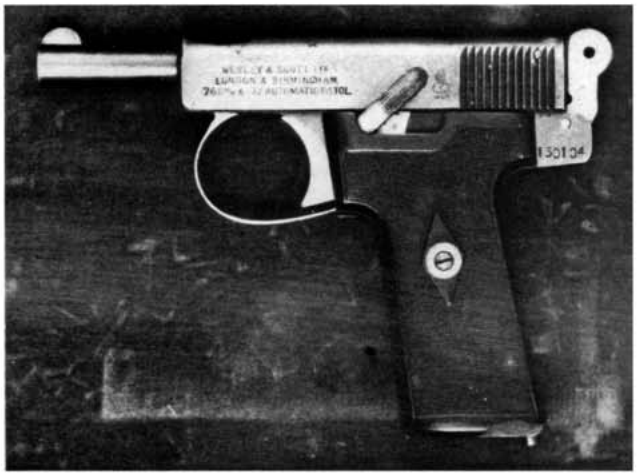
Lot 47 A 9mm Webley and Scott Semi-Automatic Pistol, serial no. 55419, with 3¾-inch barrel the slide stamped 'Webley & Scott Ltd, London & Birmingham 9mm Automatic Pistol' and engraved 'W.S.C. from J.M.B. 1911', chequered horn grips, the grip safety inscribed 'The Rt. Hon. W. S. Churchill MP, House of Commons, Westminster', polished hammer, 8⅛ in., about 70% blue, in velvet-lined leather case.
Sold for £300.

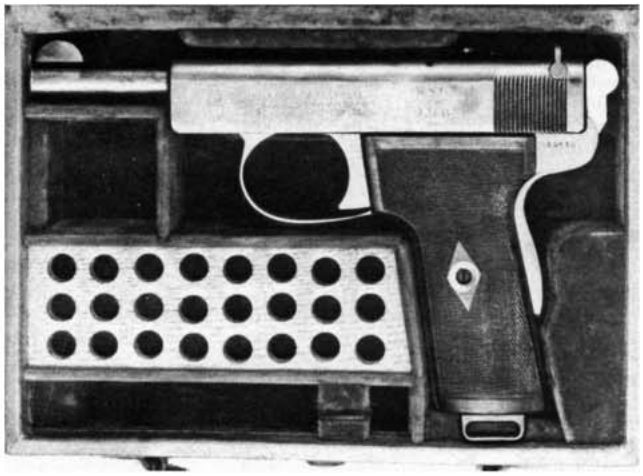
Lot 48 A Presentation .303 Ross M1910 Mk. III Bolt-action Rifle with 30¼-inch barrel, the receiver stamped 'Ross Rifle Co, Canada M-1910 Patented', straight pull bolt, the housing with adjustable rear-sight, walnut full stock with pistol grip, the butt with oval silver presentation plaque inscribed 'To Rt. Hon. W. L. Spencer Churchill with the compliments of Colonel The Hon. Sam Hughes M.P. Minister of Militia and Defence for Canada 14th February 1914', box magazine and blued steel furniture, 50½ in.; and a Mauser '98 Bayonet, 16in.
Sold for £750.

The Ross rifle and the Lanchester sub-machine gun were purchased by the Imperial War Museum although the weapons are not currently on display. The two Sten guns and the Patchett (the early name for the Sterling sub-machine gun) went jointly to gunsmiths Roberts of 5 King Street, London and Weller and Dufty of Birmingham and are still available for sale. However the withdrawal of all Ministry of Defence permits for prohibited weapons during the past five years has meant that private buyers in the UK are virtually non existent. Certain museums are still allowed to retain fully automatic weapons although, if on public display, these have usually been deactivated.

The 9mm Webley and Scott was purchased by gunsmiths Holland & Holland of 13 Burton Street, London and has since been resold.

Winston Churchill retained four pistols owned by his grandfather, a .45 Wilkinson revolver which he had used in north-west India in 1897 and a .45 Colt automatic which he had carried in the trenches in WWI and two post-war presentation weapons, a 9mm Browning and a Colt .45 Commander.





The Sotheby auction of Winston Churchill's personal armoury on July 15, 1975. *From top to bottom:* Lot 43 — the presentation Lanchester. This weapon is a British adaptation from the German Bergmann machine pistol and was manufactured by the Sterling Engineering Company Ltd. as a weapon for the Royal Navy. Lot 45 was the .30 M1 Carbine, unengraved, which was probably one of a number given to Churchill in 1940. Lot 42, the Patchett, was named after its designer, George Patchett, awarded £116,975 for his invention after ten-year legal battle with the British Government. Lot 48 was the Canadian .303 Ross rifle. Lots 46 and 47 were the Webley and Scott semi-automatic pistols. *Above left:* The 7.65mm and *(above right)* the 9mm version. Webley and Scott ceased production of all 'automatic' pistols in 1939 (Photographs courtesy Sotheby Parke Bernet & Co. London).

Above: **Churchill's Sten No. A42485 currently for sale at Weller and Dufty's in Birmingham. An engraved commemorative plate has now been added to the weapon.**

General Eisenhower was another Second War personality who liked to practise pistol shooting when time permitted but who also did not bother about official ranges. Captain Harry Butcher, his aide, records that they practised at Telegraph Cottage (a weekend retreat for the General at Coombe Hill in south London) with a .22 pistol on several occasions in 1942.

He also records an amusing incident when this training was put to good use by the General on December 19, 1943 in Italy:

'After Ike returned from the front Sunday afternoon, he visited for the first time the hunting lodge, where he took up quarters. I had found this remote and ancient stone building, nestled amongst the hills which make the mountain ridge rising behind Caserta.

'I had perhaps oversold the joint to the boss and to myself. In any event, when he arrived at the "dream cottage" he was tired and a bit disgruntled.

'So he sat down in the first room he entered — the living-room with the Italian stove — which was warm and, I thought, attractive. He wasn't inclined to move to accept my invitation to inspect my "dream cottage".

'Presently Mickey came dashing down from Ike's bedroom. He shouted, "There's a rat in the General's bathroom," and added that he was afraid of rats. He carried Telek (Ike's dog), who had discovered the rat, and wouldn't let him down.

'The rat was sitting on a toilet seat, a perfect target for Ike, who put on his spectacles, growled that the light was bad, and carefully took aim and shot — furrowing the seat under the rat. It jumped to a pipe. Always an advocate of trigger squeeze, he again took careful aim and shot. He clipped its tail. The rat jumped a foot higher, clinging to the pipe. Again Ike shot. The rat tumbled to the floor after a final shot and lay quivering. Williams was the mobile reserve and was on hand with a large stick of firewood and did the mopping up.'

We wrote to Harry Butcher in Santa Barbara, California for more details of the incident and he kindly gave us a sketch map of the layout of the building where the shooting took place but, unfortunately, could not remember its location. However, Miss Anna Ortolani at the British Consulate General in Naples made enquiries for us and discovered that Ike used the 'casina di caccia di San Silvestro' — Prince Umberto's hunting lodge in the San Silvestro reserve. We are indebted to her and to the Director of the Caserta Tourist Board for providing a photograph of the historic toilet! General Eisenhower's pistol is now at the United States Military Academy.

Right: **The San Silvestro hunting lodge which was the scene of some unofficial target practice by Ike in 1943.**

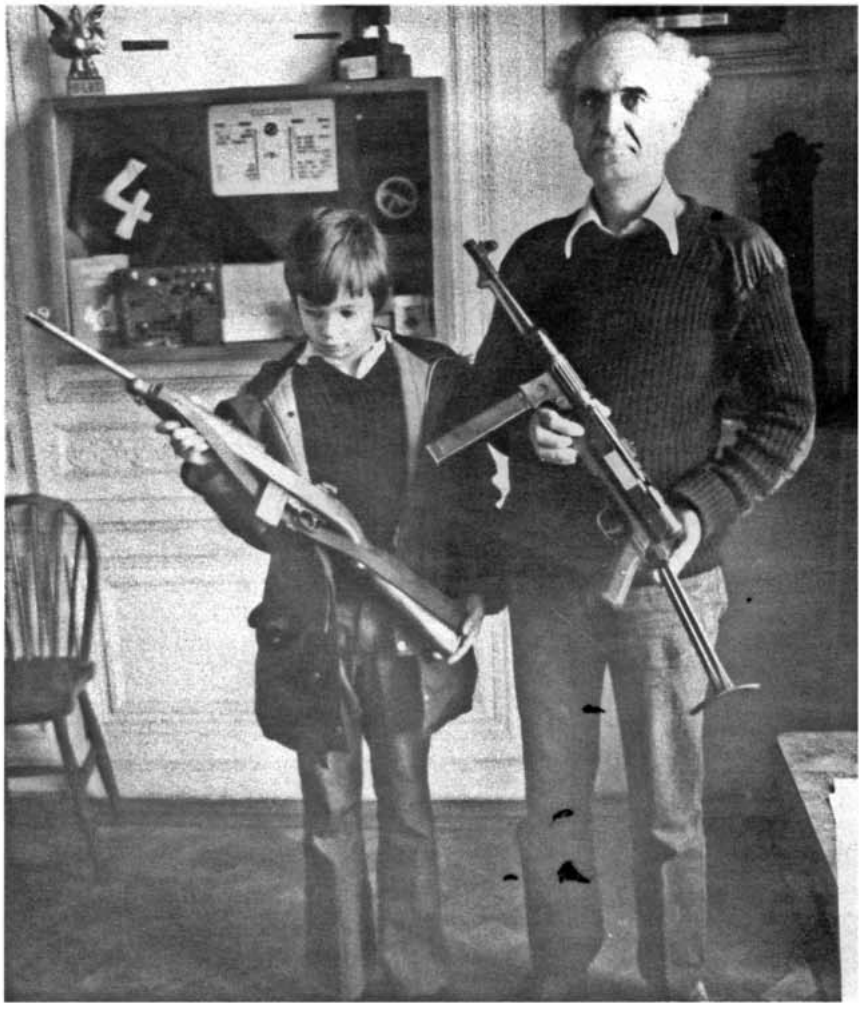
Four pistols retained by Winston Churchill's grandson. Top left: A .45 Commander model with ivory grips, No. 28131-LW, presented by Colts. Bottom left: The well-worn .45 Government Model semi-automatic, No. C15566, carried during the First World War and, most probably, the one the Prime Minister used for practise in WWII. Top right: The .45-calibre Wilkinson Model 1892, No. 9027, used on the north-west frontier of India when Churchill was a member of the 4th Hussars. Bottom right: A 9mm Browning, No. A13709, given to Churchill by the FN company.

Above: **Scene of the shooting in Italy and** *(below)* **General Eisenhower's .380 Colt semi-automatic pistol now at West Point in the USA.**

One weapon possessed by a wartime leader which can be seen on display in London is the Schmeisser MP 38 sub-machine gun captured from a German parachutist during the 1940 raid of Narvik and presented to the C-in-C of Polish forces, General Sikorski. The General died on July 4, 1943 but the gun, with a suitably engraved plate, remained in London. It can now be seen in the Sikorski Museum at Princes Gate, London.

On the opposite side, any weapon belonging to Adolf Hitler obviously rates the highest for interest value. We traced three pistols whose provenance can be reliably traced back to the Fuehrer.

The most impressive is a special presentation model Walther PP in 7.65mm calibre with deep engraving and thick, initialled ivory grips which was presented to Hitler on his 50th birthday by the Walther company at Zella-Mehlis. The pistol has no serial number but is engraved 'Ehrengabe der Familien Walther' roughly translated as 'a peace offering from the Walther family'! and has been authenticated by Heinz Linge, Hitler's valet. The entire pistol is a masterpiece of the engravers art. Minute attention has been given to every face of the weapon, on the sides of the trigger and trigger guard, head of the grip plate nut and bolt and even inside the safety well. The pistol was 'liberated' by an American colonel in Germany in 1945 and brought back to the United States. Later the pistol was purchased, together with other



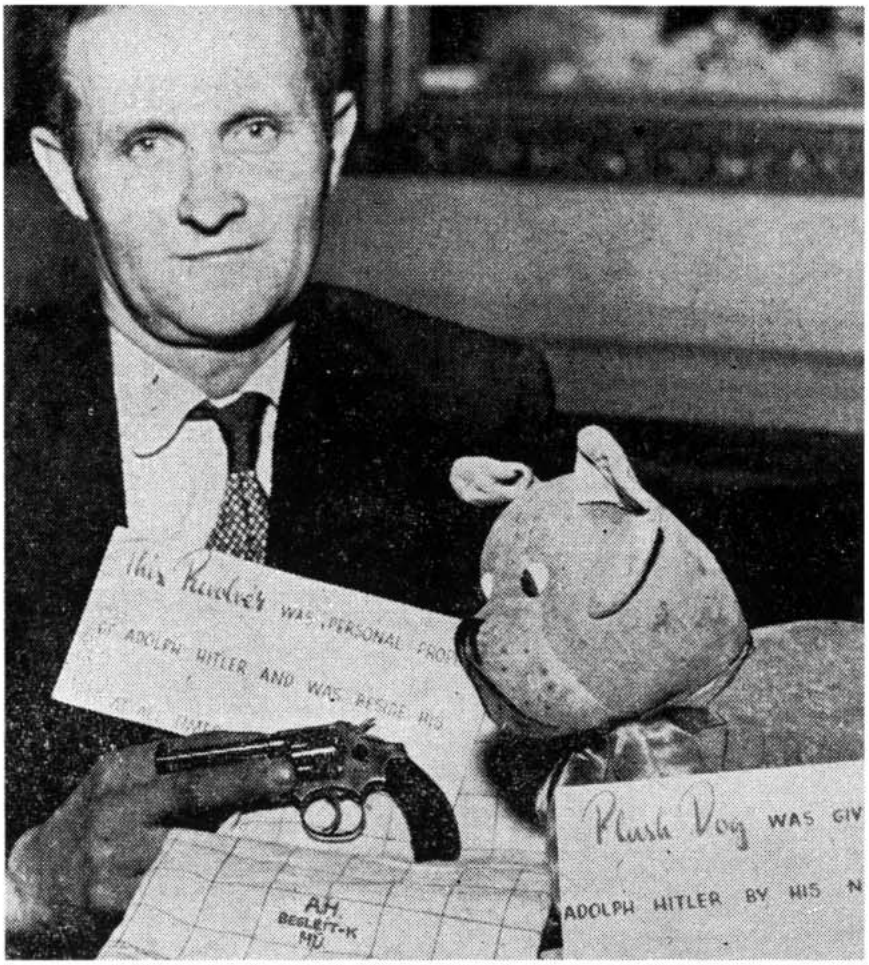
Top: **General Wladyslaw Sikorski is presented with the 9mm MP38 on July 9, 1940 by a delegation from the Polish Independent Podhalanscy Rifle Brigade. The weapon had been captured at Narvik-Ankenes, Norway on May 28, by riflemen of the 2nd Battalion.** *Right:* **The weapon, now deactivated, is displayed by Captain Milewski of the Sikorski Museum while the editor's son holds the M1 Carbine given to Lieutenant-General Wladyslaw Anders by General Mark Clark in Italy in 1945.**

The ornately-engraved, unnumbered 7.65mm Walther PP presented to Adolf Hitler by the Walther Waffenfabrik Company on his 50th birthday — April 20, 1939. The weapon is now owned by Andrew Wright who runs the Wright Historical Museum in Canada.

personal items which had belonged to Hitler, by an antique firearm dealer in Cleveland, Ohio. In the late sixties, Andrew Wright, who has one of the largest collections of Third Reich memorabilia in North America, bought it for his museum located in the grounds of his farm at Swift Current, Saskatchewan, Canada. However, because of its value, the Walther is not on display and is kept in a bank vault.

Mr. Wright believes that his Walther is possibly the one used by Hitler to commit suicide. There are traces of human blood under the grips which have been analysed by a laboratory as being of the same blood group as Hitler's. However the editor has positive information that the weapon which Hitler used on April 30, 1945, probably the most infamous weapon of all time, was picked up by one of those present in the bunker. The present German owner does not wish to be identified and has declined to reply to our request for a photograph.

Andrew Sivi of Jamestown, New York, served as a jeep driver for his headquarters' captain in the 45th 'Thunderbird' Division. In Munich he was sent out with an advance detail to obtain quarters for the next day and Hitler's house at No. 16 Prinzregentenplatz was chosen as the unit's command post. Hitler's 65-year-old housekeeper Anny Winter, still living in the building, soon befriended Pfc Sivi because, he says, 'I looked German and the housekeeper said I had kind eyes'. 'It was from her that he obtained several of Hitler's possessions, one being a fully-loaded 1904 Smith & Wesson .22 pistol No. 709 'in a fancy black case with gold hinges from Hitler's desk' says Sivi. 'It was in the same drawer as his medals which included the



Andrew Sivi holds the .22 Smith & Wesson revolver reputed to be the weapon with which Geli Raubal committed suicide in 1931 at No. 16 Prinzregentenstrasse, Munich.

The 7.65mm Walther PP semi-automatic pistol which once belonged to Hitler's Armaments Minister Albert Speer which was given to General Anderson, the Eighth Army Air Force Commander of Operations, now at the USAF Museum.

Iron Cross'. The housekeeper told him that it was the pistol that Hitler's niece Geli Raubal had used to commit suicide in that building on September 17/18, 1931 although this conflicts with Heinrich Hoffmann's description of the weapon as being 'a small 6.35mm pistol' which is .25 calibre.

All the items were cleared by the US Army as legal war plunder and, shortly after Pfc Sivi was discharged in September 1945, his collection was displayed in Buffalo by the Army which placed its value at $50,000. Mr. Sivi told us that he would sell the collection including the pistol 'if the right price can be had'.

Another interesting German weapon is the pistol belonging to Albert Speer, now in the Air Force Museum at the Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio.

The German armaments minister, Albert Speer, celebrated his fortieth birthday on March 19, 1945 with an informal gathering in his office on the Pariser Platz in Berlin. With the broken windows boarded up with cardboard and the central heating inoperative for lack of coal, General Leeb, an officer with whom Speer had a strong friendly working relationship, presented him with an engraved 7.65mm Walther PP automatic pistol No. 215361P. He presented it, he said, with thanks for Speer's co-operation.

In April 1945, Albert Speer had a tentative escape plan using the long-range seaplane which throughout the war had plied between northern Norway and the German weather station in Greenland. He was to be flown there by the German ace Werner Baumback. However, when Hitler committed suicide and Grand Admiral Doenitz was appointed to be his successor, Speer scrapped this plan. When Germany surrendered on May 7, 1945, Albert Speer was a member of Doenitz's government. British troops surrounded Flensburg but, for two weeks, a hiatus reigned with neither arrest or freedom and Speer was permitted to accept the offer, by the Duke of Holstein, to stay at Glucksburg Castle near the Danish Border.

There he freely discussed the effects of, and his counter measures against, the bombing of Germany with members of the United States strategic Bombing Survey team attached to General Eisenhower's staff. General F. L. Anderson, Commander of Operations for the Eighth Air Force, came personally to thank Albert Speer for his help during these discussions. Anderson said of Albert Speer that, 'Had I known what this man was achieving, I would have sent out the entire American Eighth Air Force merely to put him underground'.

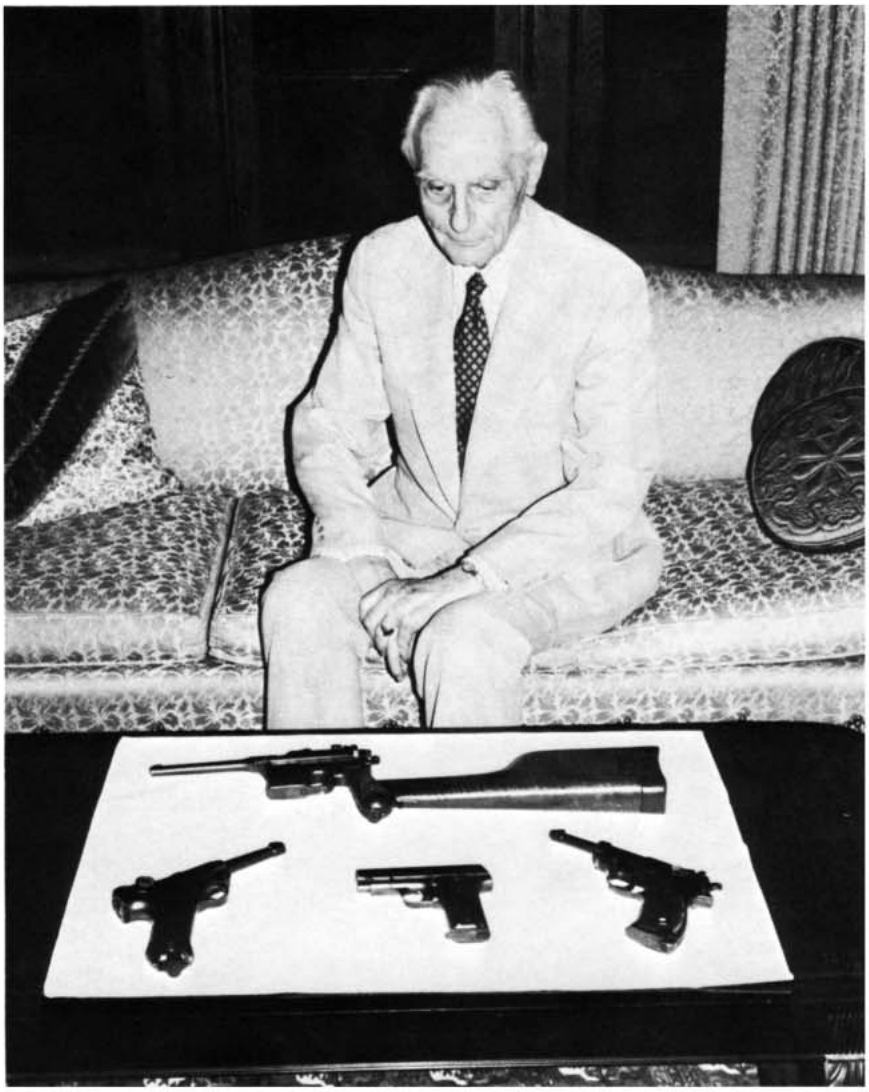
In an inspiration of the moment, touched that General Anderson his former enemy had visited him, Albert Speer presented Anderson with the Walther given to him two months earlier. Sitting in a room on the first floor of

Hermann Goering surrendered this .38 Smith & Wesson Model K Military Police revolver when he was captured near Fischhorn in Austria on May 8, 1945 by men of the 36th Infantry Division of the US Seventh Army. Now at West Point Museum.

Glucksburg Castle, Speer wrote a letter of its surrender. The pistol was later given to the Air Force Museum by General Anderson and it is now on display together with the original letter and its translation.

The surrender of a personal weapon, be it a sword by a Japanese or a sidearm by a Western officer, has always been a token of the laying down of arms. Such weapons are obviously greatly prized by their recipients and none more so than the four pistols taken by Major General Robert V. Hasbrouck following the surrender of the German L111 Panzer Corps in the Ruhr pocket when four German generals visited his command post near Minden on April 16, 1945. Generalmajor Fritz Bayerlein, commander of the L111 Panzer Corps surrendered a Spanish Royal which he had obtained during the Spanish Civil War. Generalleutnant Ernst Hammer of the 190th Infantry Division handed over his 9mm Luger whilst Generalmajor Siegfried Waldenburg of the 116th Panzer Division surrendered a 7.63mm Mauser complete with its wooden holster/shoulder stock. The fourth pistol, a 9mm Walther P.38, was surrendered by the commander of the 180th Infantry Division, Generalmajor Bernard Klosterkemper.

As is evident by this mixed bag of pistols, German generals had no uniformity concerning their personal sidearms. Nevertheless, Major General Hasbrouck writes that 'I have retained them to this day . . . mounted on a board along with a copy of the surrender picture . . . as souvenirs of a gratifying war experience.'



Top: **Major General Hasbrouck accepts the surrender of the L111 Panzer Corps from its commander Generalmajor Bayerlein on April 16, 1945.** *Right:* **Robert Hasbrouck at his home in Washington with the four weapons handed over at Minden — the Luger P.08 from Generalleutnant Hammer, the Mauser with shoulder stock from Generalmajor Waldenburg, the Walther P.38 from Generalmajor Klosterkemper and the small pistol in the centre, the Spanish Royal, from the Corps Commander.**